Nicholas Zharkikh

Smolensk War (1512 – 1514)

Kyiv – 2026

Notes for the readers

This document contain shortened english version of my work. It can be freely downloaded from my personal site, from HTML version of work, by URL www.M-Zharkikh.name/en/History/Monographs/SmolenskWar1512-14.html

HTML version can be slightly modified and corrected.

There are large-scale images available in HTML version. This document contain only low-res images.

Shortened russian version (57 p.):
www.M-Zharkikh.name/ru/History/SmolenskWar1512-14.html

Full ukrainian version (282 p.):
www.M-Zharkikh.name/uk/History/SmolenskWar1512-14.html

This book had been written in Kyiv, October 22, 2025 – April 16, 2026 (**1337-1513 days of our righteous war against the Muscovite Horde**).

This version of document created May 23, 2026.

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The war between the Grand Duchy of Moscow and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which began in 1512, clearly showed the changing balance of power in Eastern Europe.

On July 31, 1514, the Muscovites, under the command of the Grand Duke of Moscow, Vasyl III, besieged Smolensk. Their advanced detachments advanced further west to the Berezina (approximately 230 km from Smolensk) and showed a clear intention to capture the entire Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

The Lithuanian army pushed the Muscovites east and defeated them in a major battle near Orsha (110 km west of Smolensk). However, the Lithuanians did not have enough strength to recapture Smolensk, which until 1611 was part of the Muscovite state.

The demarcation that emerged at the end of 1514 was fixed by the truce of 1522. This border, changing its status, still serves as the state border of Russia and Belarus today. In this work, I want to consider the prerequisites, course, and consequences of the war.

How to read? For a general idea, I advise you to start from the end, with "Conclusions".

Anyone who wants to learn more about the course of this war can look into the section "Course of events", or take a look at the one I've put together source reading list and draw your own conclusions. For reference, I compiled "Chronology of events".

Today's fireworks display was quite rich and loud, lasting in several waves from 1:00 to 7:15. The most notable were three distant but well-audible explosions at about 1:20, then artillery fire and a close explosion at 5:10, then the fire – the sound of the Shahed flying over – a close explosion at 6:10 (well, you can just check the clocks) and another check of the clocks at 7:10 – an unusual sound of the flight, which grew very quickly, and immediately a close explosion. This sound was not like the whining sound of a propeller-driven Shahed, which grows quite slowly. This sound is most similar to a motorcycle traveling at high speed. Perhaps it was a jet Shahed, although the sound was not at all like the sound of a turbojet engine (but maybe I just haven't heard many such engines).

Wrote about the consequences in all 3 districts of the left bank of Kyiv and in the Holosiivskyi district, and also mentioned ballistic missiles. Two deaths are already known (October 22, 2025 at 7:40).

Outside the window, relatively distant gunfire and another distant explosion can be heard (October 22, 2025 at 7:44 a.m.).

They write, already 25 wounded in Kyiv. And I noticed: when I note "near explosions" – these are all explosions in the air, that is, the sounds of anti-aircraft fire. There are no reports of any hits / destruction near where I live (October 22, 2025 at 2:00 PM)

They write: 30 injured in Kyiv, damage in 6 districts, most of them in Darnytsky and Dniprovsky (I live in the latter). With such *auspices* my new job starts (October 22, 2025 at 8:09 PM).

Sources

The adventures of October 22nd are not over yet. Wrote, that during the evening attack by Muscovites in Kyiv, 4 people were injured, a synagogue in the Podilskyi district was hit. I did not hear this alarm or the sounds of battle (October 23, 2025 at 8:01).

The list of who figures will be mentioned in this work has not changed much compared to 1512 [*Zharkykh M. I.* Battle of Vyshnivts 1512 – K.: 2025, section «Actors»]. Unless Pope Julius II died in early 1513, and a new pope named Leo the 10th (Giovanni de' Medici) was elected. Also, Peter Tomicki, one of the archdeacons, was named in 1514, and then on February 19, 1515, he was consecrated as the bishop of Przemyśl.

This anthology contains, if not 100, then at least 90% of what we know about the war of 1512-1514. It does not include later fantasies on the themes of this war, which are not sources at all. Historians are happy to use these late fictions in their works, but I have rejected them.

From this anthology, the reader can reflect on what rags are used to sew the magnificent robes of rulers, whose incomplete, fragmentary, contradictory, and often tendentious reports form the basis of our knowledge of the events of the early 16th century. But we have no other sources.

I also note that in the comments to the documents I provided some considerations that are not mentioned in the "Course of Events" section.

The translations of the texts from Latin were performed at my request by Google's Gemini 3 artificial intelligence, for which I express my sincere gratitude. The translations of Viktor Talakh were also used, to whom I am also sincerely grateful for his help (his translations are clearly noted).

The case of Christopher Schleinitz (1511 – 1513)

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

This story began long before the war began in 1512, but it gained notoriety in 1511. It is best told in the language of the documents themselves.

In early May 1511, King Sigismund, on his way from Poland to the Lithuanian Diet in Brest, sent Rafal Leszczynski as ambassador to the Duke of Saxony George the Bearded (1471 – 1539). The subject of the embassy was actually Christopher Schleinitz.

Embassy from King Sigismund to Duke George

The King's Letter to Marienburg

Chronicle of Decius

Conclusions

This example shows the great and irreparable evil consequences of Sigismund's seemingly insignificant decision in the fall of 1506 – to remove Prince Mikhail Glynsky from the position of court marshal. The offended Glynsky, not finding justice from the king, which he had been waiting for until the Minsk Diet (August 1507), raised a riot and fled to Moscow (fall 1508).

A small group of his supporters, who had no quantitative weight, emigrated with him to Moscow. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania lost several dozen soldiers, while the Grand Duchy of Moscow gained these few dozen.

The significance of this emigration was not quantitative, but qualitative. Mikhail Glynsky had acquaintances in Germany since his youth (1490s) and probably maintained them during his service under King Alexander. At that time, these connections worked (or at least could work) in favor of Lithuania. And now Mikhail used these connections in favor of his new master – Vasyl III.

It is possible to believe that it was Glynsky who found Schleinitz – the Moscow diplomats of that time had neither the experience nor the connections to recruit such an agent. Through Glynsky, Schleinitz gained the ruler's trust, perhaps even met with Grand Duke Vasyl, and received important assignments, broad powers (to seek allies for Moscow!) and, apparently, considerable money for advances to soldiers.

King Sigismund followed the activities of the clever German and tried to hinder it, but did not achieve any success in this. Moscow, thanks to Glynsky and Schleinitz, gained some influence in Saxony, and this was very beneficial for Moscow and very unpleasant and even threatening for Sigismund in the conditions of the war that was approaching and then began.

The register book (1514)

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

both the whole

> Kyiv, stupid night, rain. I wake up to the sounds of distant but distinct explosions – 3:55. Over the next five minutes I counted 17 explosions – probably the Muscovites attacked with their rockets.
>
> Wrote about the attack **ballistic** rockets, 8 injured, damage in Dniprovsky, Desnyansky and Darnytsky districts. Traffic blocked on Boryspilska Street – there is an industrial zone on one side of it, maybe the Muscovites wanted to hit there. Or maybe they aimed at the kindergarten across the street. You can expect anything from the Muscovites (October 25, 2025 at 8:10).
>
> Air Force reported, that the Muscovites launched 9 Iskander ballistic missiles, of which 4 were shot down. Since ballistic missiles are shot down mainly in Kyiv, I assume that 16 counter-missiles were used. Observers now note that the Iskanders have been modernized, and now one attack missile requires 2 to 4 anti-aircraft missiles. Apparently, that was the case that night.
>
> In addition, write already about two dead and 13 injured, also about fire in food warehouses on the left bank of Kyiv (October 25, 2025 at 1:47 p.m.).

Since war as a and the campaign of 1514 were initiated by Moscow, at the beginning of the anthology of documentary reports an extract from the complete, detailed edition of the Moscow war register book (*razryadnaya kniga*) for 1475–1605 should be presented. I omit fragments that do not concern the Smolensk campaign, noting the following places: […]

Notes

The text shows some signs of later editing. Yes, Prince Andrew, brother of Grand Duke Vasyl, is named *Starytsky*, although he received Starytsia as an estate only in 1519, therefore, in 1514 no one could have known that he would one day become *prince of Starytsia*.

Also Tsarevich Peter named *son-in-law* of Vasyl, although according to modern terminology he is Vasyl's *brother-in-law* (husband of sister).

> And the Air Force confirm that all 4 ballistic missiles were shot down over Kyiv (October 25, 2025 at 9:18 p.m.).

Letters from January to March 1514

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Letter from Peter

Well, I didn't hear any Muscovite concert tonight, but in the morning I am reading. – in Desnyansky district of Kyiv, three dead, 29 injured (7 of them children). Also in Obolonsky district, falling debris. This is the northern part of Kyiv, I can't hear what's happening there (October 26, 2025 at 7:28).

Tomicki to Mikołaj Kamianiecki

February 4, 1514 Embassy to Voivode Bohdan

February 4, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Jan Laski

February 4, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Achilles de Grassi

March 3, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Thomas Bakoc

March 3, 1514 King's Instruction for Christofor Szydlowiecki

Letters of April 1514

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

April 10, 1514 The king's order to recruit an army

April 29, 1514. Register of payments to the army

Letters of May 1514

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

May 13, 1514 Order to Janusz Swierczewski

May 19, 1514 Letter from Peter Tomicki to Christofor Szydlowiecki

May 20, 1514 The king's order to recruit an army

May 20, 1514 Letter from Peter Tomicki to Jan Lubrański

May 23, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Mikołaj Kamianiecki

May 24, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Luka from Górka

May 24, 1514 Mobilization Order

May 26, 1514 Tax on the purchase of food for the army

May 26, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund
to King Mengli-Girey

May 26, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund
to Tsarevich Mehmet Giray

May 26, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund
to the Lithuanian ambassadors in Crimea

May 31, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund
to King Mengli-Girey

Letters of June 1514

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Letter from Peter

I think so explicitly requested – not to tell Trump about the only relatively reliable way I know to make America great again.

But he somehow learned about this method and began to act in its spirit, starting a war against Venezuela and threatening to spread it to Cuba and Iran, not forgetting Greenland.

Whether anything will come of these aggressive attempts – the future will show, but I will just remind you: I clearly spoke about **world** war, not about small local wars like in Grenada or Kuwait.

Well, and Trump's promise, that the US will rule Venezuela until a "safe transition of power" says that the system of stepping on the long-known rake has not changed. The US ruled Afghanistan for 20 years, until it ensured a transition of power from the Taliban to the Taliban (January 4, 2026 at 8:10).

Tomicki to Bernard Wapowski

Letter from Peter Tomicki to Jan Lubrański

Letter from Petro Tomicki to Christofor Szydlowiecki

June 18, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Jan Lubrański

Letters of July 1514

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

July 1, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Jan Laski

July 1, 1514. Letter from King Sigismund to the captains

July 6, 1514. The edict of King Sigismund to the mercenary army

July 18, 1514 Letter from Peter Tomicki to Bernard Wapowski

July 26, 1514 Letter from Peter Tomicki to Luka from Górka

July 26, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Stanisław Chodecki

July 28, 1514 Letter from Peter Tomicki
to Jan Konarski

Letters of August 1514

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Early August 1514 Letter from King Sigismund
to brother Władisław

August 16, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund
to Maciej Drzewicki

August 28, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund
to Queen Barbara

August 28, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund
to Maciej Drzewicki

Letters of September 1514

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Today at 2:40 I woke up to clearly audible explosions. I heard at least three of them, maybe there were more before that. Then for a few minutes there were distant sounds, like anti-aircraft artillery.
And wrote about a hit in the Obolonsky district, 1 dead, 2 injured.
Also one dead in the Fastiv district of the Kyiv region.

I want to note something that official commentators are embarrassed to write. The kidnapping of the Venezuelan president is a direct and open permission for the whole world to destroy heads of state. Until the very end of 2025 and even on January 1, 2026, the unwritten law of the inviolability of heads of state operated in the world. Well, you could threaten with a finger, you could issue an arrest warrant (which no one was ever going to execute), well, in extreme cases – cause concern. And from now on, anyone who has the time and inspiration can freely attack heads of state, referring to the precedent of "USA vs. Venezuela."

Thus, for the sake of a penny "rating" (which is still unknown – will it increase or decrease) an important provision of the interstate **customary** rights is detroyed (January 5, 2026 at 8:03).

September 2, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund
to Maciej Drzewicki

September 13, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund
to Jan Konarski

September 18, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Pope Leo X

September 25, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Jan Laski

September 26, 1514 Letter from Jacob Piso to Jan Koricyński

Letters of October 1514

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

October 9, 1514 Letter from King Mengli-Girey to King Sigismund

October 18, 1514 Embassy of King Sigismund to the Hungarian King Władisław

October 20, 1514 Embassy of King Sigismund to Pope Leo X

October 20, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Leonardo Lauredano

October 21, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Count John of Spiš

October 23, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Prince Casimir of Cieszyn

October 23, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to the Cardinal of Esztergom

October 25, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Poznań and Płock

October 28, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Mikołaj Wolski

October 29, 1514 Treaty of King Mengli-Girey with King Sigismund

Letters of November 1514

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Today's lapting (Muscovite attack) began at 23:35 (still on January 8, 2026) and then I heard the next waves of anti-aircraft artillery fire at 1:25 and around 3:00. In addition to this fire, I heard several distant strong explosions, up to six in number (an indication of the force of the explosion is the shaking of the windows from the air wave). Since 3:00 we have had no electricity, heating, and water. There is gas – at least that's good. And outside – it's snowing and -8°. Well, we live and work on.

Wrote, that in Kyiv there are 4 dead, 18 injured; heating outages in 9 districts of the city (out of 10), electric transport is not working on the left bank of Dnipro (January 9, 2026 at 8:35).

We got water around 1:00 PM, and the electricity was turned on at 6:25 PM. We have a new record for the duration of the outage: 15.5 hours (the previous record was 14 hours at the end of 2022).

And so, while our people were messing around with the municipal services of Kyiv, the American Senate, feeling that elders were not following it, took action and forbade Trump from fighting in Venezuela. But they attacked the wrong person! Trump did not lose his temper and declared war on Mexico. The Senate did not forbid attacking Mexico. And in France, tired of the US's senseless political antics, announced about the intention to leave NATO.

Oh! The light only lasted 20 minutes, at 6:45 p.m. it was turned off again. Once again, our people will not have time to put order in this whole sandbox called "world politics". Well, we don't have heating, except that the snow has stopped, and outside the window it's -9°. And already 26 injured in Kyiv (January 9, 2026 at 6:56 PM).

November 3, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Voivode Bohdan

November 7, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Janusz Swierczewski

November 13, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to Jan Lubrański

November 18, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to King Mengli-Girey

November 18, 1514. Letter from King Sigismund to Khan of Kazan, Magmet-Amin

November 18, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to the clerk Mikhail

Letters of December 1514

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

December 1, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to the mercenaries in Vitebsk

December 1514 Embassy of King Sigismund to the provincial assemblies in Poland

December 23, 1514 Letter from King Sigismund to King Mengli-Girey

December 23, 1514. Instruction of King Sigismund for Ambassador Jacek Ratomski

December 27, 1514. King Sigismund's Award for Jan Basta

December 29, 1514 Universal of King Sigismund with the pardon of Prince Mikhail Mstislavsky

Documents 1516 – 1522

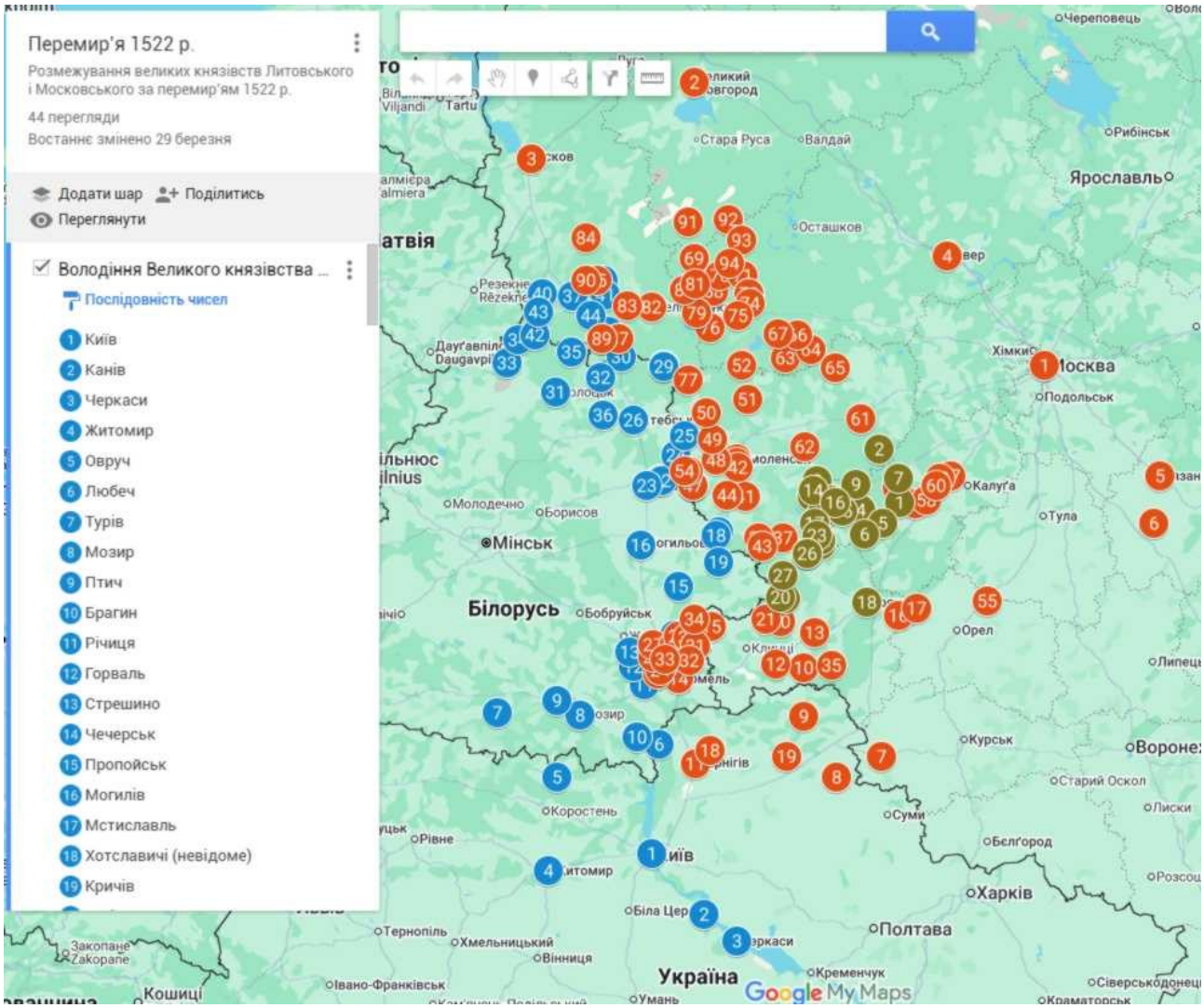
Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

June 13, 1516 Universal of King Sigismund with the pardon of Yuri Nemirovich

September 1522 Truce between Grand Duke Vasyl of Moscow and King Sigismund

It should be noted that the Lithuanian copy of this charter, issued in Krakow, has significant structural differences from the Moscow copy. The main difference is that it first lists the possessions of Sigismund, and then – of Vasyl and his brother Yuri. However, a detailed comparison of these copies was not part of my task, from the Lithuanian copy I took only the different readings of geographical names.

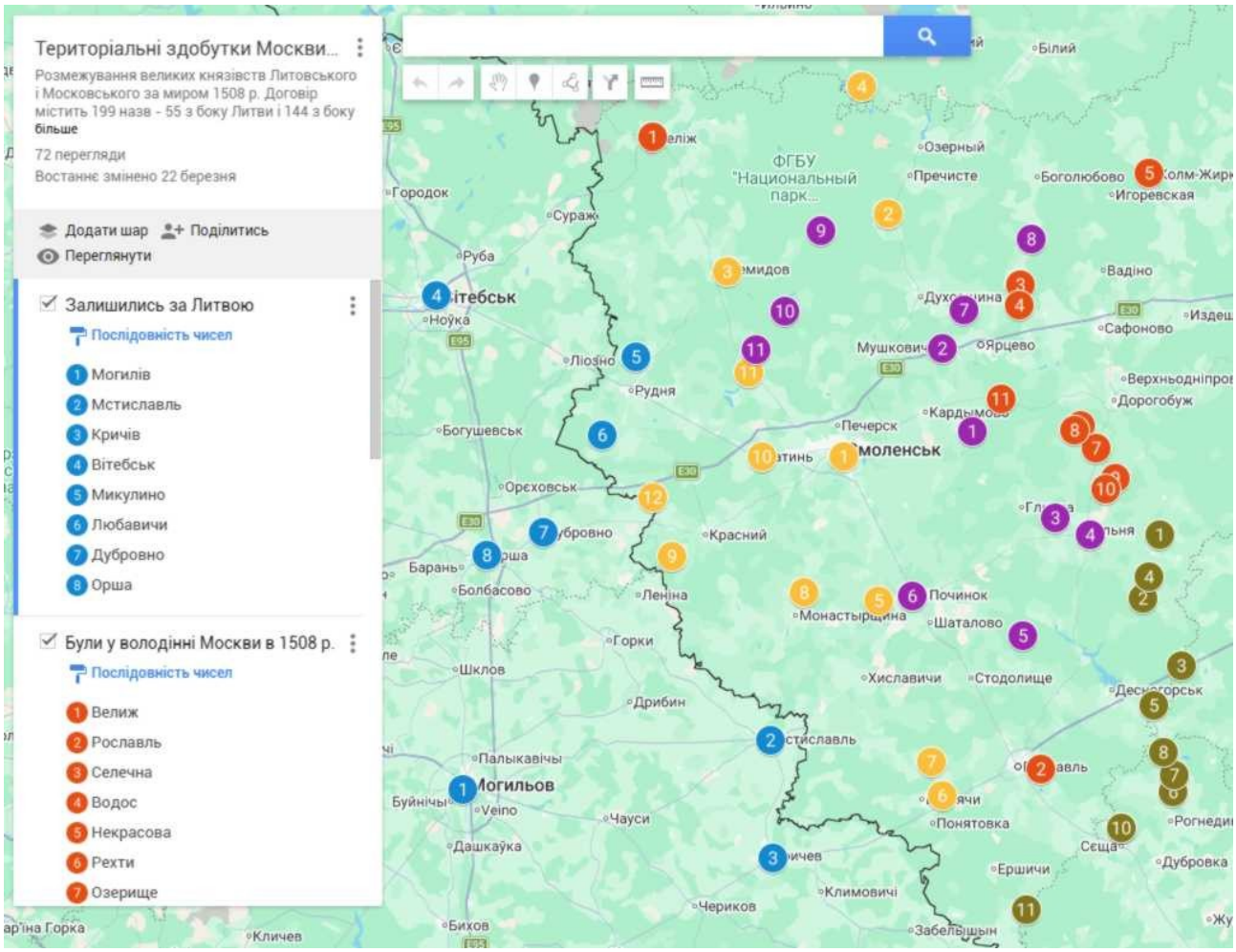
The truce map looks like this:



(You may find it more convenient to view this map in a separate window: google.com.)

This map should be compared with schematic map of the «eternal peace» 1508 [*Zharkikh N. I.* Princes Glynski. – K.: 2023, section "Peace of 1508»]. While compiling the map of the peace of 1508, I searched for the mentioned names and provided more extensive comments, with references to the relevant literature. Here these comments are presented in a simplified form, without the argumentation that often accompanied the word "apparently."

I have drawn the differences between the borders of 1508 and 1522 on a separate map:



(You may find it more convenient to view this map in a separate window: google.com.)

The changes concern the western part of the modern Smolensk region of Russia. Roslavl was mentioned twice in 1508 – both on the Lithuanian side and on the Moscow side. Now it was clearly considered to belong to Moscow. Similarly, Mstislavl was mentioned twice – now it was clearly considered to belong to Lithuania. The purple color highlights the objects mentioned in 1508 as belonging to Lithuania – now they have passed to Moscow. To better outline the new border, a number of objects not mentioned before are also named on the Moscow side (sand color).

The most important conclusion from this map is very simple: the demarcation of 1522 almost completely coincides with the modern border of Russia and Belarus.

Praise to Prince Ostrogski (1515?)

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Praise to Prince Ostrogski

I look at the calendar and see that yesterday was a small anniversary – 1418 days of our righteous war against the invasion of the Rotten Straw Horde. During this time, the Soviets, under the wise leadership of Comrade Stalin, ran from Brest to Stalingrad, where the Germans set fire to oil depots (and this is 1500 km, and to Vladikavkaz – even 1900 km), and then covered the ground with their corpses all the way to Berlin and the Elbe (and this is 2500 and 2600 km). So, on average, they walked 3 km per day, losing 39 thousand people per day.

And now, under the leadership of Comrade Putin, they have retreated 13 km from Basivka to Sudzha and then advanced 18 km from Sudzha to Yunakivka, that is, 22 meters per day, losing 860 people per day (this is without taking into account indirect losses, which are taken into account for 1941-1945). And the oil depots in Volgograd are burning from time to time under our aircraft-shells – the Muscovites really "managed to repeat this."

Something did happen – either the straw wasn't rotten enough, or it was gone, and the Horde should now be called the Bareback (January 12, 2026 at 8:20).

Notes

Chronicles of Great Russia (1518 – 1650)

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Chronicle from 72 languages

The Chronicle from 72 languages Younger edition (Uvarov Chronicle, abbreviated L72Ya) was brought to 1518. This is the oldest of the Moscow chronicles, which contained a description of the 1514 campaign and the Battle of Orsha, and was written closest in time to the events described. I add to its rather lengthy narrative internal headings that were not in the text.

Campaign of the Grand Duke of Moscow Vasyl
Capitulation of Smolensk
Surrender of other cities
The betrayal of Mikhail Glynsky
Vasyl's departure from Smolensk
Defeat of the Muscovite army
The betrayal of Bishop Barsanuphius
The arrival of Lithuanians near Smolensk

Remark

The Chronicle of Jehoshaphat

Yermolinsky Chronicle

Vladimir Chronicler

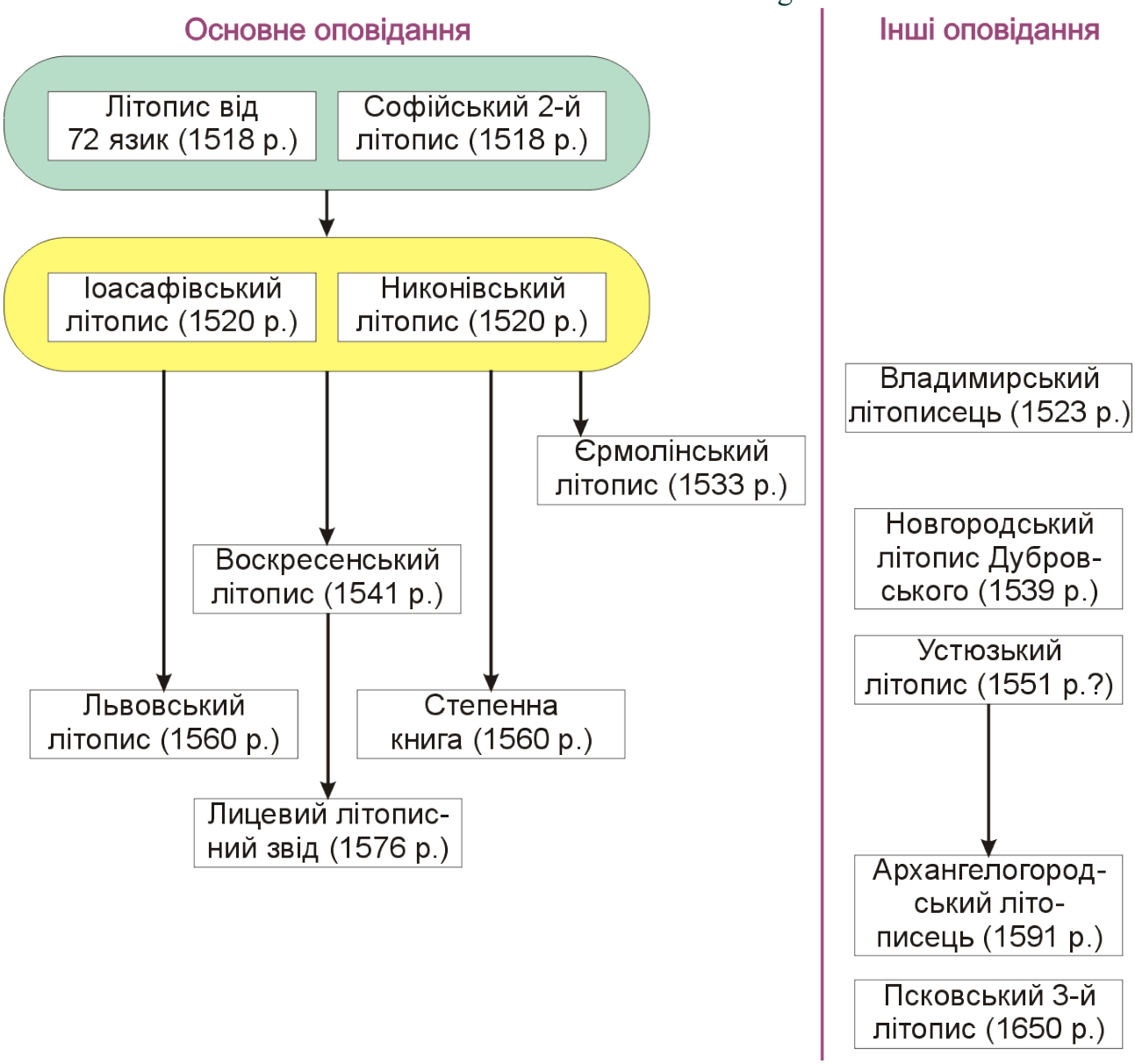
Novgorod Chronicle of Dubrovsky

Ustyug Chronicle

Pskov 3rd Chronicle

Conclusions

The stemma of the stories under consideration can be imagined as follows:



Stemma of stories about the 1514 campaign.

The main story is presented in many copies and several editions. The earliest edition L72Ya / S2L has the greatest source value, with minor details added to it by the IoL / NikL edition.

We also have four other stories, independent of the main one. Of these, the record of the Vladimir Chronicler has the most source value.

> On the morning of January 14, 2026, I was unable to write a science paper because the electricity was turned off at 6:35 PM on January 13 and was not turned on until the morning. My charging station had 30% of charge left, and I had to save it because I didn't know how long the outage would last.
>
> At this time, around 8:00 and then from 9:30 to 9:45, I heard the work of anti-aircraft artillery, which is quite unusual – to hear those guns in the middle of the day. Well, the light appeared at 9:55 (January 14, 2026 at 11:22).

Justus Decius (1521)

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

The next written account of the

> I heard today's Muscovite attack in the form of a series of 10 (approximately) explosions at 2:00 and then another 6-7 explosions were heard at 2:16. The light and water immediately disappeared, and an hour later the heating batteries also cooled down. So I knew without looking at the Internet that the Muscovites had hit somewhere. The information came, one might say, directly through the pipes. It was -13° outside. Approximately so wrote.
>
> Once again, our utility workers don't have time to sweep away all the filth from world politics, and a plagiarist from the USA has started a hybrid annexation of Greenland. Well, we have the second inter-NATO war (the first was in 1971 between NATO member Greece and NATO member Turkey. Friendship won in it) (January 20, 2026 at 8:32).
>
> The heating was restored around 10:00, but then there were interruptions, then around 18:00 it started working more stably (I hope), although the temperature of the batteries is not very high. Water appeared with reduced pressure around 12:00, with normal pressure around 17:00. There is still no electricity.
>
> On this occasion, I arranged a professional holiday for myself – the day of the lazy person. It is good because it can be celebrated on any day of the year and even for several days in a row and do nothing legally. I also save energy from the charging station and in this way help the homeland (January 20, 2026, at 18:36).

Smolensk campaign of 1514 was recorded by Justus Decius in his "History of King Sigismund." Since the account is quite long, I inserted internal headings into it, which original text did not have (however, it had, as was usual in printed books of the 16th

century, lanterns in the margins, which indicated the content of fragments of the text; however, I did not translate them).

The beginning of the war
Fall of Smolensk
Piso’s Embassy
Mykhailo Hlynsky
The Muscovite offensive
Preparing for battle
Battle of Orsha
News of victory
Adventure with captured Muscovites
Vasyl’s escape and the unsuccessful siege of Smolensk
The role of the Crimean King
Echoes of victory in Rome

And what, didn't I say that a lazy person's day can last several days? Electricity went out on January 22, 2026 at 3:20, that is, it was out for 49 hours and 20 minutes. Well, I have a new record, not just some measly 14 or 16 hours. Of course, all this time I had to conserve energy in the batteries as much as possible. So, January 21 is also a lazy person's day.

Not far from us, on Rusanivsky Boulevard, a «point ща invincibility» has been set up. Two large orange tents and a car with a generator. I didn't go there, thinking that there was no point in hanging around without a clear need, but I started to think about it. In addition, good people have also installed charging stations in the grocery stores, and people are standing near them – charging their phones. Further, in the next building there is a cafe, and next to it – a bench, you can sit. And on that bench there is a socket by the cafe for charging your smartphone, you just have to come with your own cable. It's not very fun to stand around in the cold, but it's still better than nothing.

I had just managed to charge all my batteries – when at 6 o'clock the lights were turned off again, and I don't knows how long (I think no one knows and will say). In addition, somewhere in the middle of the day on January 21, the Internet went down – probably the intermediate routers were left without power, or some other trouble happened. And the Internet is still not working. This is how we celebrate the Day of Unity of Ukraine!

I write down these small everyday adventures so that the reader has an idea of the conditions in which my science is written. Well, I'm finishing and turning off the computer. Happy new lazy person's day! (January 22, 2026 at 11:26).

Bernard Wapowski (1530s)

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Bernard Wapowski (1475 – 1535) was a cleric and in 1514, as we saw above, stayed in Rome. At the end of his life he worked on a chronicle of Poland, completed up to the events of 1535. This chronicle at one time remained in manuscript, part of it has been lost; the most interesting part for the years 1480 – 1535 was printed only in 1874.

Since the text is quite long, I decided to include internal headings in the translation that were not in the original:

The beginning of the war
Myszkowski
Siege of Smolensk
Lithuanians' preparation
Piso's Embassy
Camp in Borysiv

Mykhailo Hlynsky
Advance to Orsha
Battle of Orsha
Attempt to recapture Smolensk
Celebrating victory
Notes

Sigismund Herberstein (1549)

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Today from 1:30 to 2:30 I heard the sounds of anti-aircraft fire – up to 24 distinct explosions (not counting distant, less distinct ones) and anti-aircraft artillery fire, I also saw 3 or 4 flashes outside the window (so somewhere nearby). I heard another explosion around 4 o'clock. This is the Muscovite way to hold "negotiations". Now we have no water. Well, there has been no light since 6 o'clock, but this does not seem to be directly related to the night Muscovite attack.

Wrote about 1 dead and 4 injured in Kyiv (January 24, 2026 at 8:04).

Sigismund Herberstein (1486 – 1566) collected materials about Muscovy during his embassy trips in 1517 and 1526, but published his "Notes on Muscovy" only in 1549, after the death of King Sigismund (Herberstein clearly did not want to give the king's enemies weapons against the ruler of Poland). Here is his story, in which you can see something from Decius and Wapowski.

Water was provided around 10 a.m., with weak pressure. The heating, surprisingly, works.

Also pleased the Iranian foreign minister, who shed crocodile tears for American taxpayers, whose money is spent on aid to Ukraine and is here "stolen by corrupt Ukrainian generals."

All the American taxpayer money that is not given to Ukraine will go to bombs for the American army, which is going to bomb Iran again. Golden minister!

Why are Ukrainian generals "corrupt"? – Because they beat Muscovites. And Russian and Iranian generals, who only know how to lose wars – no, at least they are not corrupt.

Iran is our enemy. We must treat it as an enemy. Iran shoots down our passenger planes. Ivan helps the evil Russian empire with his “Shaheeds” (Russia has large reserves of evil, but is not able to build a flying lawnmower on its own). Iran wants to create nuclear weapons and destroy… well, at least Israel for a start. Iran, we now see, is opposing us on the international stage.

Therefore, I see no need to worry about the mass killings of Iranians by the Iranian authorities. They are killing each other themselves, without any international help, without the help of Ukraine. And that is wonderful, we should give them a chance. We should root for both teams and wish them success in the killings. A good Iranian is a dead Iranian. What is unclear? (January 24, 2026 at 11:08).

Stanisław Górski (1550s)

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Today at around 1:20 I heard a pretty loud explosion.

Wrote about the fall of debris from downed UAVs, in the Bilogorodska community (west of Kyiv) – two dead (January 28, 2026 at 8:05).

And then wrote already about **hit** UAV into a residential building in Holosiivsky district (January 28, 2026 at 10:47).

Stanisław Górski (1497 – 1572) became famous in Polish historiography for compiling a large collection of documents from the reign of King Sigismund I (Acta Tomiciana), from which I took a lot of useful information (as above). Górski began to organize his collection after Sigismund’s death, in the 1550s, and at that time he wrote introductory articles (Commentarii) to the first 10 volumes. He used the books of Decius and Herberstein, which had already been published at that time. In the article to the volume for 1514, he paid much attention to the Battle of Orsha. Again, I divide the long narrative with internal headings, which were not in Górski’s original Latin text:

Muscovites approach Smolensk
Betrayal in Smolensk

Fall of Smolensk
The King prepares to fight back
Jacob Pison
The Lithuanian army’s campaign
Battle
Losses and prisoners
Triumph in Vilnius
Prince Vasyl’s Despair
Offensive on Smolensk
Mengli-Girey
Echoes in Europe
Notes

Chronology of events

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

In the following table, I intend to present the events of the war of 1512–1514, with references to sources.

Blue background – the actions of the Lithuanians are highlighted, sandy background – actions of the Muscovites.

[Table with 78 lines.]

Course of events

Background to the war

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

The rise of

As soon as they started talking about an "energy truce" in the war yesterday (January 30, 2026), I thought to myself: "I'll find out about this truce through the pipes."

And I found out: today from 11:30 we have no water and heating. Well, the electricity was turned off at 8:30 supposedly as planned, but whether it will be turned on as planned is unknown. So, instead of "power outages", we can talk about "energy truces". Well, and add "energy truce day" to "idleman's day" (January 31, 2026 at 15:37).

Moscow's power

Every state exists to the extent that it captures the territory of its neighbors faster than its neighbors capture its territory. The rise of the power of a state is reflected in the growth of its territory, and the decrease of its territory shows the decrease of the power of the state and threatens its complete disappearance.

Moscow's plan to seize "all the Rus'"

Lithuania's Union with Crimea against Moscow

Winter campaign of 1512 – 1513

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Tonight the Muscovite attack started at 0:48, and by 1:10 I counted 24 explosions, including a few fairly close ones (parked car alarms were screeching). The next batch of rotten straw arrived at 1:40 – I counted 8 more explosions.

Wrote about the consequences in 5 districts of Kyiv; the part of the left bank – without light and heat (well, my heating is currently working, and the lights were turned off at 11:50 PM on February 2), about morning missile strike about the Trypillya power plant, about strikes on energy in the Odessa region – in short, an energy truce in all its glory, you can't even ask for anything better.

And the degenerate, struck by dementia, continues to build a great America in his own sclerotic head and humbly asks a gopnik from St. Petersburg's backyard don't beat anyone in Kyiv for at least a week.

The once great power, the USA, has gone, and "it is impossible to turn back the clock" (February 3, 2026 at 9:35).

Moscow did not even wait for the Lithuanian ambassadors to reach Crimea and agree on something there. Already in the autumn of 1512, the Moskow foerign office (*Posolski prikaz*) issued a short but very decisive memorandum on Lithuanian affairs [SIRIO 35, No. 48.34, p. 498 – 499]: the king, contrary to the treaty (with Moscow), encouraged Mengli-Girey to attack the Muscovite lands, and under his pretext the Crimean princes attacked, and the following year Sigismund planned a joint campaign with the Crimeans against Muscovy.

Although Smolensk was not captured, Moscow benefited from this campaign in at least two ways.

First, the campaign was supposed to show the Crimean Khan the determination of the Moscow government to fight – and force the latter to behave more cautiously. And this strategic goal was achieved – the Crimeans behaved sluggishly throughout the war and never provided Sigismund with the promised assistance.

Secondly, with its rapid action, Moscow seized the strategic initiative in the war, and Sigismund was unable to intercept it in the future, limiting himself to actions in response to Moscow's actions. And this gave a great advantage: the Moscow government could plan and act at its own discretion, offensively, while the Lithuanian government was forced to adapt to the enemy's actions and be on the strategic defensive.

In search of allies

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

The failure of the campaign at the beginning of 1513 did not discourage Moscow. It sought and found allies. Thus, immediately after returning from the campaign, Vasyl III held negotiations with the ambassador of the German emperor Maximilian and concluded a treaty "on love, and on brotherhood, and on friendship." The ambassador was released on March 7, 1513. [PSRL 28, p. 347].

> A full day of idleness yesterday (February 3, 2026) did not come out, because the light was turned on at 8:35 PM, and I was hastily composing the war news. Well, I read this: on the one hand, "Russia has dealt the most powerful blow to Ukrainian energy since the beginning of the year", and on the other hand "Trump said that Putin adhered to the terms of the "truce" and denied Zelensky's accusations".
>
> I remember that a long time ago, somewhere at the beginning of the war, that is, in 2014, I saw an ironic picture: two people are standing among the ruins and one asks: "Have you read Orwell?" – and the other answers: "No, I saw it through the window." So I also see a bankrupt, a marasmic, the head of the liquidation commission of the bankrupt enterprise "United States of America" (February 4, 2026 at 8:00).

The system was obvious – make friends through your neighbor.

King Sigismund also knew about this system. Later, on November 18, 1514, he sent from Vilnius letter to the Khan of Kazan Muhammad-Amin. His possessions lay to the east

of the Muscovite state – also an offer of friendship through a neighbor. The letter contained a general appeal – to be a friend to Lithuania, to attack Muscovite lands and not to reconcile with the Muscovite who attacked Lithuania.

Sigismund expected much more from the Crimean Khan Mengli-Girey. On September 5, 1513, the king, while in Vilnius, together with 11 lord councilors, approved a draft treaty with the "Perekop Tsar" [LM 7, No. 140, p. 280 – 283].

Summer-autumn campaign of 1513

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

According to Russian sources

Less than three weeks had passed since Vasyl's return to Moscow when it was decided (March 17) to launch a new campaign against Smolensk. [RK, p. 127].

According to a German source

This campaign is presented differently in an anonymous German note [*Ryabinin I.* New news about Lithuania and Muscovites. – Readings in the Moscow Society of Russian History and Antiquities, 1906, No. 3, p. 1 – 7].

According to other sources

This campaign did not attract the attention of Polish chroniclers. Decius dismissed it with a few general phrases. [DKZ, p. 74], Wapowski [KBW, p. 113] and then Górski [AT 2, No. 143, p. 142 – 143], sighing with relief, simply repeated Decius's story without adding anything of their own.

Conclusions

On the Muscovite side, the campaign plan repeated the plan of the winter of 1512/1513: the auxiliary army, concentrated in Velikiye Luki, was to advance on Polotsk, and the main army from Moscow was to advance on Smolensk.

For reasons unknown to us, the main army's campaign was carried out very sluggishly and slowly; the Grand Duke arrived near Smolensk only three months after the start of the campaign (which gives an average pace of 4 km per day!).

The Muscovites fielded a strong army against Smolensk, well-equipped with firearms, including large siege guns. Cannon fire severely damaged the wooden structures of the fortifications, but the assaults were unsuccessful.

The main reason for the success of the defense of Smolensk was the courage of its garrison and the skillful actions of the governor Yuri Glibovich. In second place I would put the good fortifications of Smolensk, in third place – the exhaustion of the Moscow army (let's not forget that the campaign began in June, and hardly anyone thought then that they would have to return along the snowy road), the approach of winter and the Lithuanian army.

The king's expectation for help from the Crimean Tatars did not come true – the Crimean Khan willingly accepted tribute from Sigismund, but was in no hurry to fight himself. It is quite obvious that he was waiting for the events of the war to unfold and was not at all happy about the prospect of being drawn into the war against Moscow at a time when the Lithuanians would be watching it. This can explain Sigismund's delay in sending

his army to Smolensk, but it can hardly justify such a strategic mistake, which – as we will soon see – was fatal for the entire war.

Whether Prince Ostrogski and his Lithuanians reached Smolensk – our sources do not know. If he did, it was probably after the retreat of the Muscovite army. Smolensk withstood both sieges in 1513 on its own, without help from the Lithuanian government and army.

It seems to me that the success of the defense had a certain demobilizing effect on the king and leaders of Lithuania. They believed in the invincibility of the Smolensk fortress and decided to "play defense," as football commentators say. They gave the Muscovites unlimited right to smash their foreheads against this fortress, and only then to use their field army.

But any defensive structures have their own limit of stability and endurance. Just as against any fire you can put up a barrier that will withstand it – in the same way, against every barrier you can develop a fire that will break through it. In both cases, it is a problem of time and resources. And the broken fortifications had to be repaired, restored, but there was no time for this, because in the summer of the following year the Muscovites again besieged Smolensk.

Likewise, there is a limit to the valor and endurance of the garrison of a fortress, which saw itself abandoned to its fate before a strong and stubborn enemy.

We must not forget the exhaustion of the city's population, which hid in the fortress during the siege, but the suburbs (*posad*) was burned down and the inhabitants lost everything they had – buildings, supplies, livestock, and everything else necessary for a normal life. All this had to be rebuilt and restored, and this required time and effort, while the continuation of the war and new ruin loomed.

With these results, the year 1514 began.

Be friends with the bear...

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

> Today's Muscovite attack began at about 2:20 – for 5-6 minutes I heard up to 13 distinct explosions, it seems that missiles were attacking. Then, at about 2:50, I heard lively anti-aircraft artillery firing and saw the reflections of anti-aircraft shells exploding in the sky, and a couple more explosions. At 5 o'clock in the morning, our batteries began to cool down – apparently, the "peace agreement" is already close.
>
> Although I don't understand what kind of "peace agreement" the president of the great (former) US is talking about? Who are its parties and what is its subject? It is being talked about in the US and in Ukraine, so it turns out that peace should come between them? And are we at war with America? Apparently, we are at war, I just missed something. And representatives of the rotten straw Russian Federation don't want to hear about any agreement (February 12, 2026 at 8:01).

The successful defense of Smolensk from the Muscovite invasion led the Lithuanian government

to the idea of trying to end the war on the basis of the *status quo*. Military operations ceased for the winter of 1513/1514, and on December 1, 1513, King Sigismund in Vilnius wrote a letter to Grand Duke Vasyl, reproaching him for the war he had started, the delay of the messenger Nicholas, sent in the winter (i.e. at the beginning of 1513), and the lack of a response to the demand to end the war he had sent. Now the king sent his chamberlain Litvinets to Moscow to bring a *salvus conductus* (safe conduct) for the Lithuanian ambassadors who would go to Moscow [LM 7, No. 156, p. 297].

The planned negotiations, as seems to me, had no prospects. What could the Lithuanian ambassadors have offered? Demands to give up Toropets? Or Severshchyna, or Dorogobuzh? Or to reconcile on the terms *uti possidetis* (or, as it is fashionable to say now, "along the line of military confrontation")? The latter would mean the renewal of the 1508 treaty, except with minor border changes. The Lithuanian ambassadors could not cede to Moscow "all the Rus'", which Moscow had not yet been able to capture.

But the initiative for the negotiations came from the Lithuanian side, and Moscow rightly judged that the Lithuanians needed this projected peace more than the Muscovites. They perceived this as weakness and decided to continue the war.

... hold your

Vitaliy Klitschko is very careful wrote that 2600 houses in Kyiv were left without heating, but he clearly did not say where the bast shoes hit. It is no secret to me – poewr station No. 5 on Telichka, our house is heated by it, but such restraint is probably part of the new general system – let's talk less about specific objects affected by Muscovites (February 12, 2026 at 14:39)

And on to weapons

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Already on February 4, 1514, at the council in Moscow, it was decided to prepare a new, third campaign against Smolensk [register book]. Soon, probably at the end of February, the advanced army was formed, which was to move to Dorogobuzh and then to Smolensk. At the same time, Prince Vasyl Vasilyevich Shuisky was appointed commander in Velikiye Luki. It seems that this was a gathering point for troops from the Novgorod and Pskov lands.

The appointment of commanders meant the beginning of mobilization. And mobilization, as Marshal B. M. Shaposhnikov taught us, – is the war.

We do not have further details of the mobilization in Muscovy, but we do have such details from the Lithuanian-Polish side.

King Sigismund made considerable efforts to lure the Crimean Tatars into war. Now it was not so much a question of general formulas of political union, but of coordinating plans for the campaign of 1514. On November 30, 1513, he sent Fedko Vladyka to Mengli-Girey with tribute and a letter.

The king, for his part, was actively preparing for the coming war. He gave the order to provide the castles on the eastern border (Polotsk, Smolensk, Krychiv, Dubrovno) with artillery and ammunition. In fulfillment of this order, on November 23, 1513, the Vilnius mayor made a report – where what was sent (document and commentary given above).

On April 10, 1514, king gave an order to the treasurer of the kingdom, Andrew Kostelecki (document and commentary given above). It was planned to recruit 2,000 cavalry and 2,000 infantry soldiers, with Janusz Swierczewski appointed as commander.

On May 20, the king ordered the recruitment of another 1,600 cavalry and 1,000 infantry soldiers in Poland (document). The total number of mercenaries was 6600, and this number can be relied on, since it was about the payment of money. Thus, the plan to recruit 7 thousand troops was almost completely fulfilled. But even in this letter there is no specific mention of military operations. It seemed that the war, if it would begin, would not be so soon…

But already in the evening of the same day, May 20, 1514, the first news came that the Muscovites had set out for Smolensk. The preparatory stage of the 1514 campaign was over. The actual military campaign of 1514 had begun.

The beginning of the 1514 campaign

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

> Tonight at around 4:25 the Muscovites paid me a courtesy visit – a fairly close explosion and then two (or more?) more distant ones.
>
> Wrote about missile and drone attack and about residential building fire in the Svyatoshynsky district.
>
> And in America finally found a way stop the war in Ukraine with one call. Only it should not be from the USA, but from China. They made America great again, right? (February 22, 2026 at 8:00)

Parties' campaign plans

Moscow's strategic plan was quite clear: to conquer the entire Grand Duchy of Lithuania, or at least the majority of it, while King Sigismund would be forced to disperse his forces between the eastern and western fronts.

King Sigismund, for his part, intended to outrun the Muscovites, to march in early spring and to transfer the hostilities to the territory of Muscovy. He informed the Crimean king Mengli-Girey of this intention, encouraging him to march against Muscovy. The king planned to go to Polotsk, and from there – probably to Velikiye Luki and / or Toropets (as mentioned above).

This plan seems to me quite rational. If it had been implemented, the Lithuanian army would have seized the strategic initiative in the 1514 campaign and forced the Muscovites to switch to strategic defense, acting passively, reacting to the enemy's actions – instead of imposing their will on him.

In Vilnius, they learn about the beginning of the war

Saturday, May 20, 1514, seemed to be a completely ordinary day in Vilnius. Whether the sun was shining, whether clouds were crawling across the sky, or maybe it was drizzling rain – we do not know, the sources of the 16th century were not interested in the weather. But even if it was raining – state affairs still had to be dealt with. And so King Sigismund, having kissed his beloved Barbara, set about these matters. Having received a report on the receipt of another portion of money from taxes, in the morning of that day he wrote letter to

Krakow, to the crown treasurer Andrew Kosteletsky, with an order to recruit another 2,600 soldiers in addition to the 4,000 recruited for by order from April 10. King promised to send money after Pentecost (June 4, 1514).

In short, planned preparations for the future war, which was to begin (or not begin) at some point, continued.

And then, in the evening of that same day, May 20, news came to Vilnius that the Muscovite army had appeared before Smolensk. On that day, the king's aide, Peter Tomicki wrote a letter to the Poznań bishop Jan Lubrański with this news. This is the earliest precisely dated mention of the beginning of the 1514 campaign.

The king's heavy grief and confusion are slightly visible from under the diplomatic formulas of the letters to Crimea that were written during these days.

Events during the siege of Smolensk

So, already in mid-May 1514, the Muscovite army approached Smolensk. It was a relatively small first echelon, without siege artillery, and, in my opinion, it only carried out a blockade of the city, without starting a close siege.

June 7 Grand Duke of Moscow Vasyl sent an order in Velikie Luki to Prince V. V. Shuisky – to go to Orsha. The goal was obvious – to cover the siege of Smolensk from the western side, from where they expected the arrival of the Lithuanian army.

The next day, June 8, the Grand Duke himself left Moscow for Smolensk (register book). These were the main forces of Muscovy, the importance of the campaign was emphasized by the participation of the two brothers of the Grand Duke. I think this army also had siege artillery.

Sometime in the summer of 1514, Mengli-Girey sent a letter to King Sigismund [LM 7, No. 164, p. 309 – 310]. In addition to typical general phrases about loyalty to the alliance with the king, the king reported that the enemies attacked the Nogais somewhere beyond the Volga, the Nogais crossed to the right bank of the Volga and are nomadic further west to the possessions of Mengli-Girey. The Nogais even promised to fight with Mengli-Girey. Against such a threat, the khan led his army into the field, and therefore the khan has no opportunity to send any of his sons to help the king.

The surrender of Smolensk and the offensive of the Muscovites

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Fall of Smolensk

What happened in Smolensk, besieged by the Muscovites, during the 2.5-month siege – Lithuanian sources do not know. It is likely that the siege was quite tight and the messengers could not reach the king.

The Chronicle of Great Russia immediately moves on to the details of the city's surrender, which are better read in the original. Grand Prince of Moscow Vasyl entered the captured city, was present at the solemn service in the cathedral and appointed Prince Vasyl Vasilyevich Shuisky as governor. Vasyl ordered the Lithuanian governor Yuri Sologub to

be released and taken to Orsha (it is believed that this was one of the conditions of the capitulation). All this happened on July 31 – August 1, 1514.

This event literally stunned King Sigismund. In the letter to his brother Władisław (from the beginning of August 1514), he wrote with bitterness and irritation that the Smolensk fortress, which had previously repeatedly withstood stronger sieges, had now unexpectedly surrendered, although it was fully equipped and had not undergone a significant assault! The king believed that the leaders of the defense had been seduced by the enemy's promises, betrayed and surrendered the city.

The offensive of the Moscow army

The Smolensk victory inspired Grand Duke Vasyl, and he decided to take advantage of the following warm months to continue the offensive.

The sources do not provide a detailed chronology of these events, it is only clear that all this took place in August 1514 (at the end of the 7022nd September year; September 1st marked the beginning of the 7023rd year).

Mykhailo Glynsky

I've already touched on this subject [*Zharkikh N. I.* Princes Glynski. – K.: 2023, section "The first failure (1514 – 1522)»], but now I want to look at it in the context of the war for Smolensk (this is necessary for the coherence of the story).

The most informative is the brief mention of King Sigismund in the letter to Jan Laski from September 25, 1514:

> Prince Mikhail wanted to go over to us, but was betrayed by his owns to Moscow prince, captured and chained, and was sent to Muscovy three days before the battle.

It's worth thinking about it a little.

Now I will offer my uncontroversial version of the event, which will naturally explain all the details of all the sources.

All stories of Polish (Decius – Wapowski – Górski) and German (Herberstein) sources were written later, from a height of knowledge of subsequent events and with the aim of giving the story greater drama. For this reason, they were launched into fantasy.

All of this is malicious fabrication, and no one knew any of this in 1514.

In short, we have: Glynsky was some kind of commander in the Muscovite army that was supposed to advance from Smolensk further west; the Muscovites captured him at a crucial moment before the battle and thereby introduced disorganization, which, perhaps, should also not be exaggerated.

Movement of the Lithuanian army

The news of the fall of Smolensk caught the king in camp near Minsk, where he remained until at least August 16.

I think the king saw that the army was gathering in Minsk sluggishly, and even 50 days after the mustering date, there were still not many of them.

From the Lithuanian side, we have no news about the actions of the Muscovites after the capture of Smolensk, and it can be assumed that the king had no information about this.

Then, on August 27, we see that the king's camp was already in Borisov [LM 9, No. 420, p. 254 – 255] (our sources do not know the exact date of the move).

The clash of reconnaissance detachments finally gave both sides an idea of where the enemy was. In addition, the king received some information about the Muscovites from defectors (letter to M. Drzewicki from August 28, 1514) – and not at all from Mykhailo Glynsky, as the latter's enemies fantasized. And so the king reported Drzewicki about his plan – to remain with part of the army in Borisov, and the main army should set off east on August 30 to restrain or even defeat the enemy. And a week later, the Battle of Orsha took place.

Battle of Orsha

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Today, the Muscovites shelled Kyiv with rockets, I counted up to 8 distinct explosions at about 1:25 and then up to 5 more at about 1:40. The glass in my windows rattled. Around 4:00 the heating went out – I was already used to getting political news through the pipes that go into my apartment.

And indeed – wrote about the attack with Zircon missiles. This is probably a salute in honor of the cancellation of the talks in Abu Dhabi, because there is now a war of its own there.

Israel's war against Iran is just and justified, because Iran has systematically attacked Israel with its puppet armed forces and threatened a future nuclear strike. The US war against Iran is an aggressive imperialist escalation of democracy (after all, they hold elections from time to time, and each time a small victorious war is needed to increase the popularity of the authorities).

Iran is our enemy. A good Iranian is a dead Iranian. When Iranians are killed, that's good. When Iranians are killed without our intervention, that's very good. But the US is waging a war incompetently, like everything they've been doing for the last quarter of a century. So far, we're in the enthusiastic phase with all its trappings: Tehran in three days, no losses, everything shot down, everything going according to plan, and even "our (US) goal is the unconditional surrender of Iran."

Meanwhile, the Americans fired their entire stock of anti-aircraft missiles in the first 4 days, and the war went from a "lightning war" to a "war of attrition." And the former great power, which is about to become great again and even thinks to itself that "it has the cards," is turning to Ukraine for help, which has "even fewer cards" (then there were none at all, and now there are even fewer). So it may became the same war as in Afghanistan, where the US fought for twenty years to transfer power from the Taliban back to the Taliban (March 7, 2026 at 7:48).

Moscow sources tell about this battle very briefly, with obvious reluctance. The register book writes: "And the Lithuanian people near Orsha beat the commanders" – and

that's all. Chronicle gives a little more, explaining the defeat by M. L. Glynsky's treacherous instructions for the Lithuanian army (these "instructions" should be considered slander).

The course of the battle must be established based solely on sources from the Lithuanian side.

Counterattack of the Lithuanian army

How the army was organized on the campaign, what its structure was, who its commanders were – the sources do not know. We know that the Polish mercenary army was commanded by Janusz Swierczewski, but what other units there were and who commanded them – is unknown.

Description of the battle according to the first relations

We have three such reports: the king's letter to Jan Konarski from September 13, and his – to Pope Leo X (September 18) and the letter of J. Piso to J. Koriciński (September 26>. The king's letter to Jan Laski adds little to this (September 25). The clergymen to whom the king wrote were not the kind of people who would be interested in small tactical details, and we have almost none of them.

Considering the available details as a whole, I think that the Muscovite army relaxed after the Smolensk victory, considering the following actions as the end of the campaign, which did not require maximum exertion of forces. The attack of the Lithuanian army, which had only just entered the war, was unexpected for the Muscovites, they were unable to take advantage of their numerical superiority and were defeated by a smaller army.

Poets about the battle

There are four poetic accounts of the battle. The first is a poem by Andrzej Kricki, already known to us for his praise of King Sigismund on the occasion of the victory over the Tatars at Vyshnivets in 1512. [Andreae Cricii's carmina / edidit Casimirus Morawski. – Cracovia: Typis Universitatis Jagellonicae, 1888, p. 30-35 a little about this poem: *Zharkikh N. I.* Battle of Vyshnivets (1512). – K.: 2025, section "Andrzej Kricki»].

Kricki liked to celebrate the victory – it provided a good opportunity for eulogies (the Poles even have a special expression for this – *occasional poetry*). And so he wrote the next work "Cantilena de victoria e Moscis parta die natali Sanctae Mariae 1514 rem summarie continens Andreae Cricii inclitae reginae Barbarae Cancellarii" [A song about the victory over the Muscovites on the birthday of Saint Mary in 1514, containing a brief account of the event, written by Andrzej Kricki, chancellor of the glorious Queen Barbara. The first line: "Eia chori resurgamus…". Andreae Cricii carmina…, p. 42 – 53; AT 3, No. 244, p. 196 – 200 – under the simplified title "Cantilena ejusdem victorie rem gestam summarie continens"]. It is truly a song, for it consists of 368 short lines grouped into triads.

Another very short song – only 8 lines – is called "Cantilena de victoria Moscitica in laudem Sigismundi regis Poloniae" [A song about the Muscovite victory in honor of Sigismund, King of Poland. First line: "Sismundum superi fovete regem…" – Andreae Cricii carmina…, p. 56 – 57].

Kricki had no monopoly on the celebration of victory, and so Bernard Wapowski wrote his panegyric (first line: "Indus et Euphrates, Tigris cum Gange facessant", full text:

KBW, pp. 347 – 353), which was printed in 1515 in the aforementioned Roman edition together with Kricki's poem.

Chroniclers about the battle

A fairly early and fairly thorough report was submitted by **anonymous author** Russian "Praise to Prince Ostrogski" (in my opinion, it was composed in 1515).

The next person to write about the battle was **Justus Decius**. His work, published in 1521, had a powerful influence on all subsequent historiography of the battle. His description everyone can read for themselves, I won't retell it, I'll just pay attention to some nuances.

Overall, Decius coped with his task perfectly. Having a skeleton of letters from people who were closer to the scene of the battle, he composed a convenient, coherent, and interesting story, showing the Poles in a favorable light, but without exaggregations.

Already mentioned **Bernard Wapowski** wrote about the battle of Orsha later, already knowing about the truce of 1522 and its continuation, but not yet knowing about the death of the Moscow prince Vasyl (1533) – probably somewhere in 1530-1533.

Sigismund Herberstein visited Moscow in 1517 as an ambassador of Emperor Maximilian. On the way, he met in Vilnius with the captured Moscow commander Ivan Chelyadnin and wrote down some of the latter's stories. It is these testimonies of a direct participant in the battle that are of main interest of Herberstein's story about the battle of Orsha, which overall bears some traces of borrowings from Decius / Wapowski.

Stanisław Górski was only 17 years old in 1514 and was unlikely to have been interested in the Muscovite war at that time. He was the youngest of the contemporaries who wrote about the campaign of 1514. His rather great story written based on the works of Decius and Herberstein (which Górski actively used in his "Comments" for other years), as well as documents that Górski himself collected for his collection (Acta Tomiciana).

Therefore, his story is interesting not for its factual details, but for its skillful rhetoric, effective fictions (the children's battle as a sign of victory, the picture of Vasyl's despair after defeat) and expressive Catholic patriotism. He did not miss the opportunity to recall the treachery of the Lithuanians and the baseness of the enemies of God – the schismatics. Such a religious coloring was completely absent in previous authors.

In general, the Polish authors considered provided a correct description of the events, quite acceptable for a superficial reader who did not intend to delve into the details. The disadvantage was the change in proportions – the battle of Orsha overshadowed the loss of Smolensk, we also see the growth of fiction as the events receded into the past. Valuable details were provided by S. Herberstein, whose book had a great deserved influence on subsequent historiography.

End of the 1514 campaign

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

What did Prince Vasyl of Moscow do?

Grand Duke Vasyl was stayed in Smolensk when the news of his army's defeat at Orsha arrived. I don't think he was overjoyed by this news. He had been in Smolensk for more than a month, and three months had passed since his departure from Moscow. Vasyl understood that it was time for him to return to the capital, so that Muscovites wouldn't forget who their boss was.

What did the Polish king Sigismund do?

The news of the victory of the Lithuanian army found the king in Borisov. I think he was delighted, at least he sighed with relief. His letters of September 13 and 18 were sent from Borisov, and then on September 25 – from Vilnius. Apparently, he arrived in Vilnius on the same September 24, when Vasyl arrived in Moscow.

What did Jacob Piso do?

Here I want to collect all the reports about this failed embassy in one place.

What did Khan Mengli-Girey do?

Oh, he was busy with his business! In his left pocket lay the money he had received from Sigismund, and in his right pocket – the money he had received from Vasyl. And so he was busy transferring the money that was in his left pocket to his right pocket, and the money that was in his right pocket to his left pocket.

Why? It's not easy to understand this for someone who wasn't a khan.

What did the Lithuanian army do?

We left the Lithuanian army at the moment when, immediately after the victory at Orsha, it expelled the Muscovites from Dubrovno, and the king sent it 4,000 soldiers to reinforce it, who were guarding the royal camp in Borisov.

From the Lithuanian side, we do not have any details of the campaign to Smolensk, we only have the king's explanation of why it was necessary to end the campaign without achieving all the results (for example, in letter to Mengli-Girey from November 18).

> December 3. Prince Konstantin Ostrogski, commander of the victorious army, brought the banners and military insignia of the defeated Muscovites to Vilnius and placed them in the cathedral church. [AT 3, No. 220, p. 158].

The campaign of 1514 was over.

After the campaign ends

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Awards for the Battle of Orsha

Thus, the Poles received awards for the Battle of Orsha in the form of money or material benefits. There were no land awards at all. All awards clearly state that they were given for the Battle of Orsha or for the war against the Muscovites.

The situation was different with the awards for Sigismund's Lithuanian subjects. The tradition of these awards did not provide for an indication of the act for which the award was given, but they generally wrote in a formulaic manner: "for great merits and for encouragement to further service." Therefore, it seems that no one received any awards for the Battle of Orsha, at least the Lithuanian metric does not know of such.

Burial of the dead

We have no information about the burial of fallen soldiers of the Orthodox faith – either from the Lithuanian or Moscow side. The idea, familiar to us – that one should honor one's fallen soldiers – was not yet known in the Orthodox community at that time.

Captives

There were many Muscovites captured in the battle, and they were of considerable value. They were carefully recorded, noting where everyone was.

It was customary at that time to release prisoners after making peace, but there was no peace, there were only truces (1522, 1526, 1532), then new wars and new truces – until the "eternal peace" of 1634. But that was another story.

Publicity of the Battle of Orsha

Above, I have already noted three stories on this topic: the king's letters from September 1514 with reports of the victory, the sending of Muscovite prisoners to various rulers in October 1514 as living witnesses of Sigismund's victory, and the printing in Rome in 1515 of Latin poems by A. Kricki and B. Wapowski glorifying the victory.

An engraving was created called "Die schlacht vo[n] dem Kunig von Poln. vn[d] mit dem Moscowiter. gescheen am tag Marie gepurt. M. CCCCC. XIIII." [Battle of the Polish king with the Muscovites on Mary's birthday 1514].

There are no Muscovites, no battle, and not even a king in the engraving. It is clear that the German draftsman had no idea how the cities of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania looked like and drew them as he saw them around him in Germany.

Next we have a woodcut illustrating the already mentioned poem by A. Kricki, printed in Rome in 1515. So, there can be no doubt about the time and place of its execution. Scans of it are also available on the Internet, but they are not so common, so I am including a copy here [borrowed from the article: *Anastasia Verkhovetskaya* «Triumph of freedom and unity»: anniversary of the Battle of Orsha (September 11, 2024). You can also watch scan directly from the original 1515 brochure].

Battle of Orsha. Woodcut, Rome, 1515.

The purpose of the engraving is not for the sake of labor, but for propaganda.

Engraving is the graphic equivalent of the king's letter to the Pope. The King emphasized that he had won the victory thanks to God's help – and here we see it in the engraving. Only the Lithuanian army is not on it – and this is again understandable, because the King did not specifically mention it, and everyone involved in compiling the brochure were Poles.

Warsaw painting

Next, a large painting of the battle was painted, which should be called the "Warsaw Painting of the So-Called Battle of Orsha" (or, for short, the Warsaw Painting). Its high-quality scans are available on the website National Museum in Warsaw, where it is stored, and in Wiki Repository. The painting is really large – painted on 13 oak boards, its total size is 260 × 165 cm, it is painted with tempera and oil paints. There is a entire literature. Summary of studies submitted by Polish Wikipedia.

So, I am forced to exclude the Polish king from the circle of customers and look for a customer somewhere further west.

If so, this completely excludes the possibility of it depicting "our" battle of Orsha, which had no significance for any of the numerous German princes.

I consider the use of this painting as a "source" for the Battle of Orsha to be a mistake, and the results obtained to be misleading.

Causes and consequences

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

Results of the 1514 campaign

Despite the widespread publicity of the victory at Orsha, these results were in favor of Muscovy and very disappointing for the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

As of December 1514, in the main operational direction of the war – Smolensk – the Lithuanian army controlled Orsha and Dubrovno, and the Muscovite army firmly took control of Smolensk.

Therefore, the Battle of Orsha was a victorious battle in a losing campaign.

Exhaustion of the parties

Therefore, at the end of 1514, the war came to an operational pause – in modern terms. The parties did not conclude a formal truce, but it was established de facto.

Reasons for success and failure

Moscow's success in the war of 1512-1514 was due primarily to the persistence of the government of Vasyl III in the fight for "all the Rus'."

In the ability to set a strategic (offensive) task, Moscow significantly surpassed Lithuania. Strategic defense, as Marshal Shaposhnikov taught, is a way of preparing a strategic offensive. One who only defends will always lose some pieces, which we see in the history of the Muscovite-Lithuanian wars.

To achieve its strategic goal, Moscow sought allies and found them in the countries of Catholic Europe.

In the fight against Moscow, King Sigismund could only count on an alliance with the Crimean Khanate, and this alliance gave the king nothing – except perhaps a slight reduction in the threat of Tatar attacks on the lands of modern Ukraine.

So, although Vasyl's war with Sigismund was fought one-on-one, the foreign policy situation was more favorable for Moscow.

In purely military terms, one can see that the Moscow government raised significant forces for campaigns, considered its successes and failures, drew its conclusions, and improved operational plans (i.e., campaign plans).

Instead, the Lithuanian government stuck to a system of strategic defense. A dramatic operational error on the Lithuanian side was to postpone mobilization until the beginning of the offensive of the Moscow army.

In terms of organization, the Muscovite army in the war of 1512–1514 showed nothing new.

Instead, the organization of the Polish army improved significantly compared to 1512. In 1514, we see tactical units – companies of 200 soldiers and their commanders – captains.

Our sources are silent about the organization of the Lithuanian army.

Thus, in terms of organizing the troops, each side went its own way, and it is impossible to determine which organization was better.

And so each side had both its successes and its failures in the campaign of 1514. Why is that?

When a freshly mobilized army set out on a campaign, it was best equipped (well, as far as it was possible) and its spirits were high: now we will attack, we will strike at the enemy, we will run them far away! The soldiers' spirits were raised by the participation in the campaign of the supreme ruler himself, whom the soldiers actually served. Everyone wanted to distinguish themselves and deserve a reward from the ruler.

And finally, the efforts were crowned with success, the thing for which the soldiers went on a campaign and endured all sorts of hardships – came true! And here it turns out that the army is exhausted.

And after victory, the army relaxes, tunes in to rest, not to new efforts.

When an army in the midst of such a demobilization is attacked by the enemy, it is natural that it cannot gather strength, and those who have recently achieved victory flee before the less numerous, but not exhausted, enemy.

This is how I imagine the reason for the defeat of the Muscovite army near Orsha.

The beginning of the endless war

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

The worries of rulers

At 8:43, while working on this text, I heard a not-so-close but distinct explosion, and then until 8:55, there were close and distinct bursts of anti-aircraft artillery. The sky was completely clear and bright, I even looked around as much as I could, but (as expected) I saw nothing.

That's how Americans and Arabs don't see the "Shaheeds". And the sky there is always clear, and they rub their eyes – but it doesn't help. You need to have experience, as said our President Zelensky!

Meanwhile, distant cannon fire continues. Yes, nothing special, but I'm still noting it. Not every author gets to write science to the accompaniment of shots and bursts of anti-aircraft shells (March 16, 2026 at 9:20).

And so, in December 1514, all the rulers sat down in their capitals and thought.

Mengli-Girey was the best of all. He could think of nothing. Tribute from Sigismund flowed by itself, without any effort on his part, replies with promises to be a friend to a friend, and an enemy to an enemy were also written and sent in the established order, his son and heir returned from a victorious campaign against the Circassians.

Similarly, Vasyl Ivanovich in his Moscow could not be too worried about the future. He achieved a huge success, the second after the capture of Pskov in 1510 – he captured Smolensk.

And the Polish king and the Grand Duke of Lithuania, Sigismund, felt the worst in Vilnius.

And what should he do now? Fight or make peace? The advisors could advise one thing or another, but the ruler had to decide – with the prospect of breaking new pots and paying for them again. This is the burden of power!

Congress of Vienna

The intentions to launch a new armed campaign against Moscow in the spring of 1515, if any, were now postponed.

The idea of a tripartite meeting (Władysław – Sigismund – Maximilian) was probably put forward as early as 1514.

Quite detailed descriptions of this congress gave Decius [DKZ, pp. 91 – 101], Wapowski [KBW, pp. 125 – 136] and S. Górski [AT 3, No. 433, p. 309-318; there are Ukrainian translation by Viktor Talakh].

King Sigismund had not wasted almost six months on this matter – now he could have peace in the west and north (well, as far as it was concerned ~~Budapest Memorandum~~ some papers can provide peace). Of course, the victory at Orsha, which was turned into a diplomatic lever, played a huge role here. And the measures to publicize this victory in Europe were not just Sigismund's vanity – they also had a diplomatic purpose.

War for the sake of a truce

So, King Sigismund was not against peace with Moscow on "fair terms." What those terms were – is evident from the memorandum approved in Bratislava and presented to the emperor in Vienna.

Sigismund's demands meant the complete surrender of Moscow, as well as its joining the war against Turkey as a junior vassal (which, by the way, those Catholic rulers themselves were in no hurry to do).

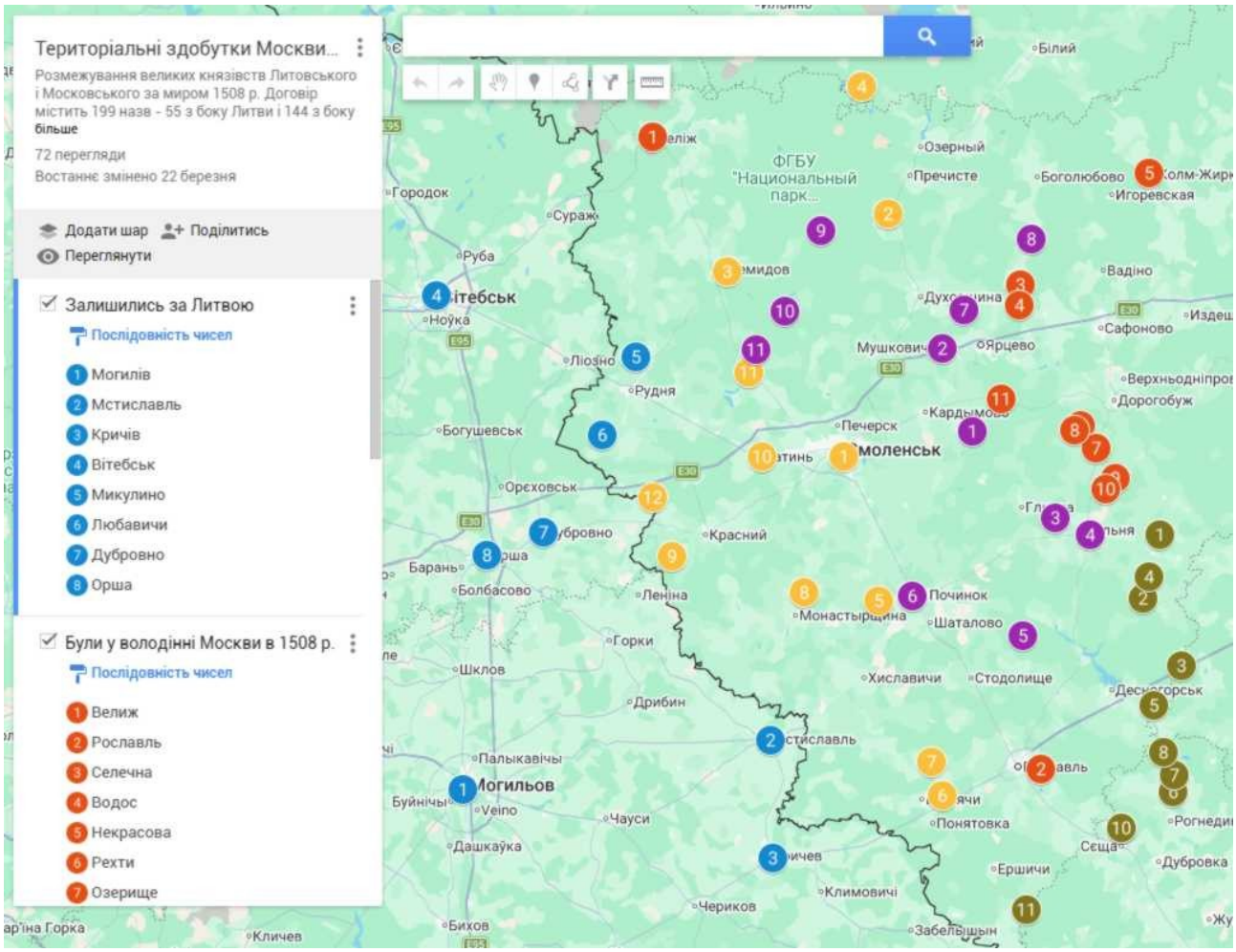
After the Congress of Vienna, the emperor's mediation in the reconciliation of Lithuania with Moscow, albeit slowly, did move forward. At the end of 1516, a year and a half after the congress, Emperor Maximilian appointed Peter Mraksi and Sigismund Herberstein as ambassadors to Moscow, gave them instructions, and sent them on their way.

On October 29, 1517, 27 months after the Congress of Vienna, Grand Duke Vasyl finally received Herberstein and the Lithuanian ambassadors. Further negotiations took place in a cold atmosphere of mutual distrust.

On November 18, the Lithuanian ambassadors left Moscow with nothing, and then on November 22, Herberstein left as well. [SIRIO 35, No. 85.18, p. 546]. Diplomatic pressure (expectedly) failed completely: the change in the emperor's policy was unfortunate for Moscow, but it took note of it – and that was all. Moscow was not going to return Smolensk or abandon plans for further expansion, just as it was not going to drag chestnuts from the Turkish hearth for the Pope.

To prevent my work from stretching into infinity, I will proceed to a concise account of the following events.

A truce for a period of 5 years was concluded in Moscow on September 14, 1522 [SIRIO 35, No. 93]. It was to last from Christmas (December 25) 1522 to Christmas 1527. The main content of agreement there was a demarcation of possessions on the basis of *uti possidetis* (or, as it is fashionable to say today, "along the line of combat contact"). Moscow gained Smolensk and the entire western part of the modern Smolensk region of the Russian Federation. The territorial gains are presented on the following map:



(You may find it more convenient to view this map in a separate window: google.com.)

King Sigismund realized the hopelessness of attempts to recapture Smolensk and therefore limited himself to refusing to legally recognize the actual loss of Smolensk and insisted that it was temporary. Therefore, no "eternal peace" was concluded, but only a temporary truce, which provided that the war would resume after its expiration.

Eternal war for eternal peace

Can the truce of 1522 be considered a formal end to the war? Both yes and no.

During the life of King Sigismund, until his death in 1548, peace with Moscow was never concluded, and the state of truce was inherited by the new king, Sigismund Augustus.

The state of truce/war was inherited by the newly elected king of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, Stefan Batory. Batory's successes forced Tsar Ivan IV to conclude a truce (again – a truce!) in the Yam Zapolsky: the Moscow kingdom lost all its conquests in Livonia, and additionally – strips of border lands in the modern Pskov, Novgorod, Bryansk and Chernihiv regions. The Smolensk section of the border remained unchanged compared to 1522.

The truce was concluded for 10 years and was then renewed. Anarchy broke out in Muscovy after the death of Tsar Boris Godunov. In 1609, the army of the Polish king Sigismund III besieged Smolensk and after a long siege in 1611 captured it and continued the offensive on Moscow.

The border established in 1522 changed from an interstate border to an internal administrative border of the newly formed Smolensk Voivodeship of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with the Vitebsk and Mstislavl Voivodeships.

But now Moscow did not want to accept the loss of Smolensk, and a truce was concluded in Deulino for 14 years – until the beginning of 1633.

In July 1634, after an unsuccessful war for Moscow, an eternal peace was concluded between King Władisław IV and Tsar Mikhail. Władisław renounced the title of "Moscow Tsar", and Mikhail agreed to recognize the territorial losses recorded in the Deulino Truce.

This is how the Smolensk War, which began in 1512, ended. It lasted 122 years and, as a result, Smolensk remained part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

Eternal peace for the sake of eternal war

But the Muscovites would not be Muscovites if they did not view any peace treaty as a "peaceful respite" that provides an opportunity to prepare for the next war.

The balance of the sieges of Smolensk in the 14th – 17th centuries looks like this:

Attackers	Defenders	The beginning of the siege	End of the siege	Duration of the siege	The result of the siege
Tatars (Tovlubiy) + Muscovites	Smolensk citizens	1339, winter (December)	1340, winter (January.. February)	"a few days" [PSRL 18, pp. 92 – 93]	The defenders defended the city
Muscovites (Semen Ivanovich)	Smolensk citizens	1352	1352	"stood on Ugra for 10 weeks" [PSRL 18, pp. 97 – 98]	Formally, there was no siege, peace was concluded before the Muscovites arrived in the city. I note this episode as the first attempt by the Muscovites to conquer Smolensk.
Lithuanians (Vytautas)	Smolensk citizens (Glib Svyato-slavych)	1395	1395, September 28	? [PSRL 5.1, stb. 511 – 512]	The city is captured by deception
Lithuanians (Vytautas)	Smolensk citizens (Yuri Svyato-slavych)	1404, 11 (?) February	1404, after Easter (March 30)	"stood for 7 weeks" [PSRL 5.1, stb. 523]	The defenders defended the city
Lithuanians (Vytautas)	Smolensk citizens	1404, spring (?)	1404, June 26	? [PSRL 5.1, stb. 524]	The city surrendered
Muscovites (Vasyl)	Lithuanians	1513, January (?)	1513, January (?)	approximately – less than a month	The defenders defended the city

Muscovites (Vasyl)	Lithuanians	1513, August (?)	1513, October 31	30 (?) days	The defenders defended the city
Muscovites (Vasyl)	Lithuanians	1514, May 15	1514, July 31	2.5 months (78 days)	The city surrendered
Poles (Sigis-mund)	Muscovites	1609, September 9	1611, June 3	**21 months (633 days)**	The city is taken by storm
Muscovites (Shein)	Lithuanians	1632, October 28	1633, October 4	12 months (340 days)	The Polish army unblocked the city
Muscovites (Alexey)	Lithuanians	1654, June 26	1654, September 23	3 months (90 days)	The city surrendered

It can be concluded that the key factor in the [un]success of the city's defense was the actions of the field army to unblock it. Where this was successful (1633), the city held out, and where the unblocking was delayed or failed (1514, 1610, 1654), the attackers took control of the city.

After the first partition of Poland in 1772, the 1522 border again became the internal administrative border between the Smolensk Governorate in the east and the Mogilev Governorate in the west. From the 1920s, this border became the administrative border between the RSFSR and the Byelorussian SSR within the USSR, and from 1991 – again the interstate border between Russia and Belarus. Thus, the legacy of the Battle of Orsha in 1514 determines the demarcation to this day.

So I can end with what I started with: using the example of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, we can clearly see how the gradual loss of territories led to the disappearance of a state that did not have the natural borders that, say, England or Japan have.

Conclusions

1. The root cause of the war, which began in 1512 and lasted 122 years – until the conclusion of the Eternal Peace in 1634 – was the irrepressible desire of the Muscovites to seize “all the Rus’” and transform the title of their ruler “Sovereign of All Rus’” from a declarative one to a real one. In 1795, after the 3rd Partition of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, they almost completely succeeded in this.

2. Moscow’s accusations that the Dowager Queen Elena Ivanovna (sister of Grand Duke Vasyl of Moscow) had been disrespected in Lithuania were false. But the Muscovites used them to justify the war.

3. King Sigismund, when concluding treaties with the Crimean Tsar Mengli-Girey, constantly included in them a clause about the Tsar’s obligation to fight against Moscow. And this was no secret to Moscow.

4. In 1512, the Crimeans launched a series of attacks on the Ryazan Principality and threatened the southern regions of the Moscow Principality. Moreover, at the end of 1512, Sigismund planned an offensive campaign against Moscow for the spring of 1513 – together with the Crimeans.

5. The Moscow government, having considered these events in the fall of 1512 as a whole, came to the conclusion that war was inevitable, and decided not to wait for the joint campaign of Lithuanians and Crimeans against Muscovy planned for the spring of 1513. It was decided to immediately launch an offensive on Smolensk. This was a preventive war, provoked by Sigismund’s actions.

6. The first campaign against Smolensk (December 1513 – February 1513) was more of an reconnaissance in force. Vasyl’s army approached the city, made sure that it was not going to surrender voluntarily, and inspected the fortifications. Although nothing was conquered, the Muscovites showed their determination, which had a powerful influence on Mengli-Girey. He decided to wait for the development of events and not to actively intervene in the war that had begun. It is also very important that the Moscow government, with its rapid movement, seized the strategic initiative and held it throughout the following campaigns.

During this first campaign, Queen Elena died, but this had no effect on anything – the war had begun.

7. Both sides were looking for allies for the war. Sigismund relied on the sweet assurances of Mengli-Girey and tried to establish contact with the Kazan Khanate. Vasyl’s government concluded alliances with the Teutonic Order and the German emperor. There was even a rumor that there was a plan to divide Sigismund’s possessions, which were to be conquered. The system in concluding alliances was – "to be friends through a neighbor."

But the Teutonic Order did not dare to attack the Grand Duchy of Lithuania when all of its forces were withdrawn to the east. Similarly, the emperor did not take advantage of the opportunity when King Sigismund went to war in the east and did not try to attack his possessions from the west.

In fact, the war was fought one-on-one between Moscow and Lithuania, but the existence of alliances prompted each side to look around for the actions of potential enemies.

8. Immediately after returning to Moscow, on March 17, 1513, Vasyl decided to launch a new campaign in the summer of 1513. The army, which was gathering in Moscow,

was to go to Smolensk, and the Novgorod and Pskov armies were to gather in Velikiye Luki and from there go to Polotsk.

Although the mobilization orders were given in the spring, the fighting was for some reason very sluggish. Vasyl left Moscow only on June 14, and he did not arrive in Smolensk until September 22. Then the siege began. It is to be assumed that the Moscow army had some organizational problems.

The siege was conducted using siege artillery, which proved effective, the front line of wooden and earthen fortifications of Smolensk was knocked down. But after a month the siege had to be lifted. On November 21, 1513, Vasyl returned to Moscow.

9. King Sigismund arrived in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (to Melnik and then to Vilnius) in early July 1513 and immediately began to entice Mengli-Girey into war against Moscow, as stipulated by older treaties and the draft of a new treaty drawn up on September 5, 1513. The king also gathered an army and ordered Hetman Prince Konstantin Ivanovich Ostrogski to set out to repel the Muscovites.

The Lithuanian army set out after September 21, unblocked Polotsk, and, it seems, continued on to Smolensk. But the main forces did not come to a battle – the Muscovite army retreated from Smolensk, not waiting for the Lithuanians to arrive.

10. The king had no illusions and was sure that the Muscovites would continue the war. He gave orders to secure the castles on the eastern border with guns and gunpowder. The king was going to launch an offensive campaign against Muscovy in the spring of 1514.

At the end of December 1513, the Diet of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania met in Vilnius, which worked until the end of February 1514. It decided to collect a tax and spend the money on paying for the mercenary army, which was supposed to be recruited in Poland. The Diet refused to approve mobilization for an offensive campaign and limited itself only to sending preliminary letters about the upcoming campaign. Instead, the Diet obliged the king to begin negotiations with Moscow on the conclusion of peace and turned to the Polish Diet with a request for military assistance.

11. Against his own will and conviction, with a firm conviction in the futility of the undertaking, Sigismund nevertheless sent an envoy to Moscow on March 2, 1514, with a proposal to begin peace negotiations. This was a major strategic mistake: the negotiations never began, and Moscow gained a great lever of influence over Crimea: look, Tsar, the king is calling you to war, and he himself is going to make peace with us.

12. Moscow was not in the least inclined to reconcile. On February 4, 1514, it was decided to launch a third campaign against Smolensk. The experience of previous campaigns was taken into account. The Moscow government refused to divide forces between Smolensk and Polotsk and concentrated all forces against Smolensk. It was decided to begin the movement of the army as early as possible in order to use the favorable summer months for the siege. It was decided to divide the army into three echelons – in order to begin the blockade of Smolensk as early as possible. A large number of siege guns were collected and provided. (It should be noted that German and Italian craftsmen helped the Muscovites in the manufacture and use of these guns, so Moscow did receive military-technical assistance from its European allies).

13. So, on May 15, 1514, the advanced detachment of the Moscow army arrived to Smolensk. On May 20, Vilnius learned about it, and it was at this time that they began to move. On May 24, the king announced mobilization, and the mustering was scheduled for June 24 in Minsk. Even before that, in April, the king gave orders to recruit a mercenary

army in Poland – 3,600 cavalry and 3,000 infantry (with rifles!) and to assemble it in Brest on June 29. The king appointed Janusz Swierczewski, who had previously distinguished himself in the battle of Vyshnivets in 1512, as the commander of the mercenaries.

But both the territorial army of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the mercenaries gathered slowly and reluctantly, and the mobilization deadlines were disrupted.

14. Meanwhile, on June 8, Vasyl with the main, third echelon of the Moscow army left Moscow. The details of the siege of Smolensk are almost unknown, the Moscow chronicle noted only the powerful work of the siege artillery. On July 31, Smolensk, abandoned by the Lithuanian authorities to its fate, capitulated to the superior forces of the Moscow army. On August 1, Vasyl entered the conquered city, held a service in the Assumption Cathedral and appointed Prince Vasyl Vasilyevich Shuisky as governor. Moscow thus achieved strategic success and victory in the war.

15. The king only left Vilnius for a camp near Minsk on July 22, a whole month late, and a month later, at the end of August, he moved the camp east, to Borisov.

Vasyl, for his part, tried to build on his success – in August, Mstislavl, Krychiv, and Dubrovna came under Muscovite rule, and the advanced units were sent further west, all the way to the Berezina River (the same one on which Borisov stands).

On August 27, the first battle between the Lithuanian and Muscovite detachments took place, and commanders on both sides learned that the enemy was close. On August 30, the Lithuanian army set out from Borisov to the east.

16. The Muscovite commanders withdrew all their forces eastward, to the left bank of the Dnieper near Orsha. Their idea was probably to prevent the Lithuanian army from crossing the Dnieper.

However, the Lithuanian army did not confine itself to the famous ford, against which the Muscovites had placed cannons, but built a floating bridge in another place and lined up on the left bank of the Dnieper on the "great Orsha field." The crossing was helped by a Krakow burgher, Jan Basta, whom the king knew about and had recruited into service in advance.

In addition, on September 5, the Muscovites captured Prince Mikhail Lvovich Glynsky, whom Grand Duke Vasyl had appointed as one of the *voivodes* (commanders), falsely accused him of treason, and Vasyl ordered him to be sent to Moscow for imprisonment. Glynsky played a certain role in the campaign against Smolensk as one of the voivodes of the advanced regiment, but his role in both the fall of Smolensk and the subsequent defeat of the Muscovites is greatly exaggerated. Neither Vasyl nor Sigismund had any evidence of his "treason".

17. The enemy troops met in a general battle on the field east of Orsha on September 8. The sources do not provide a detailed description of the battle itself, but it is worth noting the effectiveness of the Lithuanian field artillery, which unpleasantly surprised the Muscovites. The voivode Prince Ivan Ivanovich Temka of Rostov was killed by a cannon shot.

The Muscovites, unable to take advantage of their numerical superiority – 80,000 against 30,000 Lithuanian troops, fled and drowned in the Krapyveka River (12 km east of Orsha). The Lithuanians pursued them until the end of the day on September 8.

18. The king wrote about 80 thousand Muscovites in letters shortly after the battle, and he learned this number from the captured Muscovite voivodes. From his letters, the

number also passed into Polish historical works. The number of the Lithuanian army (30 thousand) was given by Jacob Piso in a letter dated September 26, 1514, which contains the bulk of the details of the campaign and the battle known to us. I consider these estimates of the number of troops in the battle to be realistic.

The Muscovites suffered very significant losses. Different numbers were given, but I consider realistic to be 16,000 killed (the least value). 4,000 prisoners were taken, including all 8 voivodes, the Muscovite banners were captured, and 20,000 horses.

19. Immediately after the battle, on September 10, Grand Duke Vasyl left Smolensk and arrived in Moscow on September 24. He ordered Prince Shuisky to defend Smolensk, and his tattered army to gather in Dorogobuzh. I think this army should have come to the aid of Smolensk if the Lithuanians dared to besiege it.

Sigismund left Borisov sometime after September 18 and (approximately September 24) arrived in Vilnius. Upon departure, he ordered a detachment of 4,000 soldiers, which he had left with him to guard the camp in Borisov, to join the main army, and the commander of the latter, Prince K. I. Ostrogski, to take back the castles captured by the Muscovites. (Here, for the first time, Ostrogski is explicitly named as the commander of the Lithuanian army).

20. However, the Lithuanian army's counterattack was sluggish. Somewhere around October 10, the Lithuanians occupied Mstislavl and Krychiv, from which the Muscovites retreated, and then approached Smolensk. Ostrogski stood near Smolensk for two days, had a skirmish with the garrison, made sure that the city was not going to surrender – and retreated (besides, winter was beginning!).

In November, part of the Lithuanian mercenary army was placed in winter quarters, in particular in Vitebsk. The decisive campaign of 1514 for the entire war ended with Orsha and Dubrovno under Lithuanian control, and Smolensk under Muscovite control. The de facto line of demarcation ran somewhere in the middle between them.

21. I consider the cause of both the first success and the subsequent failure of both armies to be the exhaustion of the troops. At the beginning of the campaign, the army is well-supplied, full of enthusiasm and a desire to serve, especially since it is led on the campaign by the ruler himself. It concentrates its forces on the fulfillment of the task set, and when it achieves success, it involuntarily becomes relaxed. In addition, it should be taken into account that success did not come instantly, it required months of effort. Therefore, after the achieved success, the army begins to expect an order to demobilize and return home, it is no longer in the mood for continued fighting and new efforts. And when, contrary to this mood, the command tries to continue the war, the army does so reluctantly and suffers failures.

So, a commander must know when to fight and know when not to fight.

22. The consequences of the pivotal campaign of 1514 were great and multifaceted.

22.1. Muscovy achieved great success on the path to conquering "all of Russia" – it captured Smolensk and a significant territory around it. The tradition was continued – each ruler of Muscovy had to conquer something and increase the territory of his state.

22.2. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania lost the war and lost a significant territory along with an important economic center – Smolensk. This was all the more unfortunate because the lost territory was relatively densely populated, and the serving people who had estates there and wanted to remain loyal to the king had to move to other areas of the Grand Duchy

of Lithuania. The loss of a key fortress on the eastern border was unfortunate. The tradition was continued – every ruler of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania after Vytautas had to lose something from his territory.

22.3. The success of the Lithuanian army in the Battle of Orsha stopped the further advance of the Muscovite army both directly in the 1514 campaign and in the following decades – until 1561. This success dashed the hopes of the Muscovite government for a quick and complete conquest of the entire Grand Duchy of Lithuania and ensured the independent existence of the latter for a long time.

22.4. Although in Polish political propaganda and subsequent historiography the victory at Orsha overshadowed the loss of Smolensk, the balance of successes and failures was clearly on the Moscow side, so for Lithuania the Battle of Orsha was a victorious battle in a lost war.

22.5. The Lithuanian government did not want to accept the loss of Smolensk in any way. In 1522, it agreed to a truce, that is, a temporary cessation of hostilities. Hostilities were repeatedly renewed in the next century, historians consider such cycles to be separate wars, but it should be remembered that they all ended in truces, not eternal peace. Eternal peace was concluded only in 1634, when the Moscow government agreed to recognize the transition of the Smolensk Voivodeship to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (as part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth).

22.6. The border line in the Smolensk region, which was actually established at the end of 1514 and was fixed by the truce of 1522, has survived all subsequent wars and revolutions. The border, changing its status from interstate to administrative and vice versa, still acts as the state border of Russia and Belarus.

22.6. The Battle of Orsha strengthened King Sigismund's position in Europe. In July 1515, at the Congress of Vienna, Sigismund, together with his brother, the Hungarian King Władisław, persuaded the German Emperor Maximilian to abandon his attempt to subjugate the Teutonic Order to the empire. The emperor also pledged to break the political alliance with Muscovy, stop providing it with assistance against Sigismund, and mediate in peace negotiations between Sigismund and Vasyl (this mediation was unsuccessful).

22.7. The capture of Smolensk by Moscow marked the end of the system of political balance in Eastern Europe, which the Crimean Khan Mengli-Girey had built and tried to maintain. He repeatedly provided the rulers of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania with his letters of commendation (*jarlyks*) indicating the lands belonging to the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Smolensk was also mentioned among these lands. Moscow ignored all these documents, captured Smolensk contrary to Mengli-Girey's intentions and rejected the latter's demand to return Smolensk to Lithuania. The Crimean Khanate lost the role of regulator of politics in Eastern Europe, which it claimed as the strongest khanate among the descendants of the Golden Horde. Further attempts by the Crimeans to fight in one direction or another were annoying for its neighbors, but no longer influenced their policy.

23. Land is the foundation of the state. A state that systematically loses its territory to its predatory neighbors risks disappearing completely, despite assurances of "brotherhood" from the aggressors.

Historiography

Shortened text of the section.
Full text in ukrainian version.

I am not going to start my review of what was written about the war of 1512-1514 from Stryikovsky; I want to focus on the works of the first quarter of the 21st century, which – I hope – also take into account older historiography.

Piotr Dróżdzh (2000)

His book [*Dróżdż P.* Orsha 1514. – Warszawa: Bellona, 2000. – 230 p.] was published in the "Historical Battles" series, which involves a popular format.

P. D. did not specifically study the history of the Battle of Orsha and wrote his book based on previous generalizing works by Polish historians. This is its main interest – you can see in a concentrated form what Polish historical science has reached on this issue.

Overall, the book is written simply and clearly (except for the confusion with the term "Rus'"). The main idea: The Grand Duchy of Lithuania was successful where the Poles fought, and suffered failures where the Poles were not (we saw above that king himself thought so in 1514). I think Polish historiography has much to refine and polish in this matter.

Mykola Ambrazhevich (2003)

The work of a modern Belarusian author [*Ambrazhevich N.* Battle of Orshan in 1514: military-historical aspect. – Minsk, 2003] It is available online and also promises a "military-historical aspect." So I read it.

For me, M. A.'s work was interesting as a window through which one can look into the little-known modern Belarusian historiography, in which pro-Moscow anti-nationalists compete with anti-Moscow nationalists. No truth can be born from such disputes – and was not born. M. Ambrazhevich's work did not provide any new knowledge about the Battle of Orsha.

Alexey Lobin (2011)

Modern Russian historian Alexey Nikolayovich Lobin, unlike the authors discussed above, is specifically concerned with the history of the 16th century, has published special articles and defended a dissertation. He has published three books:

– Battle of Orsha on September 8, 1514. – St. Petersburg: Society in memory of the Igumenia Taisia, 2011 – 251 p.

– The capture of Smolensk and the battle of Orsha in 1514 – M.: "Russian Heroes" Foundation, 2015 – 56 p. (Army affair).

- Smolensk War. 1512 – 1522 – M.: "Russian Heroes" Foundation, 2022 – 224 p. (Army affair).

The first of the aforementioned books is available online – that's what I read […]

Hurray! Our victory! The Battle of Orsha has been defeated and destroyed!

> One of the main tasks of the historian is the fight against myth-making. But we have to state that in modern science, myth-making often involves a historian, whose national and political sympathies are stronger than the main principle of historical science – to know the past without the political conjuncture (p. 33).

Everything is correct here. A. L. refutes some myths (though not everywhere successfully), repeats other old myths (without criticism and without grounds), and produces new, better myths for the benefit of the Muscovites he loves.

Of course, this is not a reason to reject A. L.'s book, which is a significant contribution to the study of the Battle of Orsha. The little-known sources he used (in my opinion, not particularly valuable) and the new methods he proposed deserve attention and further use. But the main research technique is to reject testimonies by **contemporaries** of events that are not acceptable to the author – is unscientific, and could have been abandoned long ago.

But it didn't work out. So Russian historiography still has a lot to work on in this topic.

I also know about this book: *Skworoda P. S.* Orsza 8 IX 1514 Triumf Konstantego księcia Ostrogskiego Scypiona Ruskiego. – Warszawa: Inforteditions: 2024. – 60 p. It is available in Polish Web stores, but it is not available in the public domain. I have no desire to buy this popular (judging by the title and volume) book.

Ukrainian historiography

Ukraine cannot boast of separate monographs on the topic, or even individual articles.

The overall impression is of shoddy workmanship and complete helplessness under a patriotic sauce. V. Brekhunenko could have used the books discussed above to avoid rewarding fools, but he did not do so.

Warsaw painting

Everyone who touched on the Battle of Orsha wrote about the Warsaw painting. The main drawback of the published work is blind trust in what was painted and the complete absence of a critical attitude, source analysis. Why should this image be "The Battle of Orsha"? – Well, that's what the German said, and we picked it up (as I already explained). I don't understand the history of painting and I can't say a word about its painting manner. Above I have only provided a summary of the works of specialists on this topic and some of my own thoughts on the historical context. Meanwhile, this picture has its own literature, here is some (it does not claim to be exhaustive):

Hutsul V. Spear knights in the Battle of Orsha (1514). Weapons and tactics. – Oblicza wojny, 2023, t. 8 Narzędzia wojny, p. 55 – 76.

I decided to read this article because: 1, it is the last one in the author's series of articles about the Battle of Orsha; 2, because the title of the article promises a broader question than one picture.

I think a positive feature of this article is that it does not mention *cossacks* at all. This clearly indicates that the author's views are approaching reality – that reality that was obvious to an unbiased reader even without special studies.

Reference literature

Encyclopedic articles are not usually considered works of historiography, but they influence public opinion a thousand times more than narrowly specialized monographs. Therefore, I will touch on them briefly.

Of all this, the overwhelming influence is exerted by Wikipedia articles, which violate the encyclopedic standard by presenting their own (sometimes quite fantastic) reasoning,

not based on existing literature. Their reports on the role of the Battle of Orsha in the national memory of various states are interesting – no one has yet seriously addressed this topic.

Conclusions

The more recent historiography of the Smolensk War is highly politicized and focuses on the Battle of Orsha, rather than the loss of Smolensk, which was the main result of the war. In Polish, Russian, and Ukrainian historiography, one can see a tendency to pull the blanket over oneself. This is understandable and happens often. In Belarusian historiography, one can see a tendency to push the blanket away from oneself. This is not so understandable and happens quite rarely, so it deserves more attention.

Researchers are not interested in sources, do not bother with source studies, are unaware of the dependence of later written sources on earlier ones, and do not ask questions – where could this or that ancient author have learned the details he provided.

Much effort is expended on completely futile attempts to revise the testimonies of contemporaries of the events and to calculate the number of troops independently of this testimony. These attempts, as well as attempts to reconstruct the tactical pattern of military actions, are baseless fantasies that future researchers should abandon.

Much and completely undeserved attention is paid to the Warsaw painting, which is unreasonably considered to be a depiction of the Battle of Orsha and is regarded as a photo report from the battlefield. This indicates (understandable) great desire of researchers to benefit from illustrative material, but it is impossible to justify the inclusion of this and other images as sources for the battle itself (and not its European echo).

Today, witnesses of the eternally alive Pushkin decided to remind themselves. At 2:30 – 2:40 I heard a series of up to 10 relatively close explosions, and then at about 3:00 – another, shorter one. I counted up to 15 in total, but there may have been more, because some explosions simply merged. Judging by experience – these were Muscovite rockets.

Then, around 6:50, I heard distant, but quite audible, anti-aircraft artillery fire, which didn't last long.

And wrote, that in Kyiv there are already 5 dead and 21 injured (April 16, 2026 at 7:14). Wrote about 19 Iskander ballistic missiles.

So with such *auspices* I finished my work on the Smolensk War. I think everyone understands my position on our righteous war against the invasion of the Russian federated Horde, but no one can say that it influenced my attitude to the events of the 16th century.

List of abbreviations

AS – **A**rchiwum książąt Lubartowiczów **S**anguszków w Sławucie (Lw.: 1887…).

AT – Acta Tomiciana, mainly v. 3.

AZR – Acts relating to the history of Western Russia, collected and published by the Archaeological Commission (St. Petersburg). (**A**kty, otnosjaschiesja k istorii **z**apadnoj **R**ossii, sobrannye i izdannye Arxeograficheskoj komissiej)

DKZ – *Jodok Ludwik **D**ecjusz* Księga o czasach **k**róla **Z**ygmunta. – Warsaw: 1960.

GDL – **G**rand **D**uchy of **L**ithuania.

HZM – *Herberstein S.* Notes about Muscovy. – Moscow: 2008, vols. 1-2.

KBW – Chronicles of Bernard Wapowski z Radochoniec część ostatnia (1480-1535) / J. Szujski. – Kraków: Akad. Umiejętności, 1874.

LM – Lithuanian metrics, mainly volumes 7-8.

PSRL – Complete collection of Russian chronicles. (**P**olnoe **s**obranie **r**usskix **l**etopisej)

RK – The register book 1475 – 1605 – M.: 1977, vol. 1. (**R**azrjadnaja **k**niga)

SIRIO – Collection of the Russian Historical Society (St. Petersburg). (**S**bornik **i**mperatorskogo **r**usskogo **i**storicheskogo **o**bschestva)